



# ECCLESIAL DIMENSION AND SYMBOLISM OF MARRIAGE



**Isaac Parappallil**

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## PREFACE

Marriage is a sacrament of life and love which is meant for a life long 'togetherness' of the spouses. It is a life for ever - a love for ever. What actually makes Christian marriage something special? Marriage as a sacrament draws the spouses deeper into the mystery of Christ, and it demands a life in union with God. It transposes the foundation of the union between man and woman from a simple natural level to a divine level. It is not only a question of love, but also a call and confirmation from God. Therefore, marriage is natural in purpose, and divine in origin. In marriage, God makes the two persons - husband and wife - one flesh. Is it actually one in two flesh or two in one flesh? It is true that they are two persons, but in the sacrament of marriage, they become one. This union affects the whole person, and the husband and wife become 'one in heart, soul and mind'. The 'one body' or the 'one flesh' image always expresses Christ's indissoluble bond with His spouse the Church as the source of the love of the Christian spouses. Such a beautiful life of 'one flesh' is the real marital life.

During my theology course in the seminary, it was my dream to learn more about the real meaning of the 'one flesh' image and the indissoluble bond of Christ-Church union expressed in the liturgy of marriage. I could cherish and fulfil that dream when I got an opportunity for higher studies in Rome. The present work is an output of my dream and effort. I bow my head and raise my heart in thanksgiving before the Lord for His grace and ineffable providence He has been showering on me during the preparation of this book. I take this opportunity to place on record my indebtedness to all those who have helped me in the completion of this Book. My deep and sincere gratitude goes first of all to Prof. Edward Farrugia SJ, who was the first director of my Doctoral thesis, for his valuable corrections, fraternal concern and loving



thesis, for his expert guidance, scholarly evaluation, discerning remarks and valuable suggestions. I remember with gratitude the professors of the faculty of Oriental Ecclesiastical Sciences, and the staff of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome.

I am deeply indebted to His Beatitude Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, Major Archbishop-Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Church for his love, support and continued encouragement and especially for his beautiful foreword for this work. I am very grateful also to His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Koorilos, His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Julios, His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Philipose Mar Stephanos, and His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Gheevarghese Mar Timotheos for their encouraging words, support and inspiration. I thank in a special way His Excellency Mikhael Al Jamil (Rome), Rev. Msgr. Antony Kollampampil, Rev. Sr. Kathryn Berger (USA) for their patient reading of the work and for their valuable suggestions. I express my sincere gratitude in a special way to Mrs. Rosemarie Hölzl for her support and help. I also acknowledge and appreciate with love and gratitude, the support of Rev. Dr. John Kochuthundil, Rector of St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary, Trivandrum, Rev. Dr. Philip Chempakasseril, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, staff and students of the Seminary, Carmel Publications, Trivandrum, and St. Joseph's Press Trivandrum, for their great service and assistance in publishing this book.

Let this book help all the spouses to lead their life in an



from God, not from man. The author and source of marriage is God himself. This raises the theme of marriage above the human level to the divine. The Scripture speaks throughout of marriage and its 'mystery,' its institution and the meaning God has given it, its origin and its end, .... the difficulties arising, and its renewal 'in the Lord'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1602).

The apostle Paul derives the norm of the marital relationship from the relationship between Christ and the Church. Therefore, in the symbolism of the sacrament of marriage, the central symbolism is the indissoluble union and love between Christ and the Church. In Christian marriage, the bridegroom and bride participates and shares in the Christ-Church relationship. The root and depth of love between couple is expressed in the great mystery of love between Christ and the Church. Thus Christian marriage becomes a sacrament of divine love and it is also a symbol of indissoluble love between God with His People, and Christ with the Church. Therefore, marriage is called *Magnum sacramentum* or *Mysterium* with its own symbolic association of the Christ-Church union. The self gift of the couple in marriage is a symbol of Christ's self gift to the Church through His death and Resurrection. The real content and object of the sacrament of marriage is love.

Christian marriage, as a form of human community, in service to the Church and the kingdom of God, has its own ecclesiological significance. St. Paul's teaching on marriage (Eph. 5:21-33) stresses the ecclesial nature of the conjugal



His creative activity and redemptive purpose. In this sense, marriage is reconnected with the divine purpose through its full integration into the sacramental life of the Church. The theme of the Church is projected and presented in the prayers and ecclesial images of marriage, and thus we could find a fully developed theology of the Church which provides us a clear ecclesial dimension of marriage. In this sense, Christian marriage becomes a life in Christ and in the Church, and it extends the Church of Christ through each family. Thus sacramental marriage is an ecclesial act with ecclesial consequences and ecclesial end.

Avery Dulles, in his book *Models of the Church*, refers to different models especially the sacramental model of the Church, concentrating much attention on the Western theology while ignoring, at least partly, the importance of its ceremonies and liturgy. The present work seeks to shed new light on the ecclesial dimension of marriage by using a model hitherto employed in the liturgy of marriage. Although some elements of a 'liturgical ecclesiology' have already appeared in some earlier works, no study has been devoted entirely to this particular area. Therefore, this work is original in its specific nature, since a thorough and detailed exposition of the ecclesiology of the liturgy of marriage has not yet been elaborated. The originality of this work lies in a new vision and explanation of the ecclesial symbolism in the liturgy of marriage, and it explores the roots, basis, origin and development of the important ecclesial symbols and images found in the liturgy of marriage. This study particularly concentrates on the biblical, Jewish, patristic and the traditional-customary roots of the ecclesial images found in the Malankara liturgy of marriage. The permanent Christ-Church relationship expressed therein is really an exemplar for Christian spouses. This book applies a thematic approach to the liturgical text of Malankara marriage celebration. It

makes use of all the ecclesial images and symbols found in the marriage service in order to develop a 'liturgical ecclesiology' of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church. In this way, the patristic symbols and images mentioned in the liturgy facilitate a better grasp of its 'liturgical ecclesiology'. Therefore, this work is pertinent for a better understanding of the nature, mission, and purpose of the Church. It also makes us aware of the intimate relation between Christ, the Church and marriage..

In this commendable endeavour to develop such a liturgical ecclesiology of marriage, Rev. Dr. Isaac Parappallil has worked hard through his reading, reflection and presentation. Rev. Dr. Parappallil, a professor in liturgy at the St. Mary's Malankara Major Seminary, Trivandrum is a scholar in liturgical theology, especially the theology of marriage. His research and theological reflections have added richness and beauty to the theology of the sacrament of marriage. On behalf of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church, I wholeheartedly congratulate him for this noble task.

**+ Basелиos Cleemis**  
Major Archbishop - Catholicos  
Syro-Malankara Catholic Church



## WORD OF APPRECIATION

The spousal symbolism for the relationship between Christ and His Church is very evocative. I am happy that Rev. Dr. Isaac Parappallil has done his research on this theme. The relationship between Christ and His Church is expressed in various symbols and images and each of them concentrates on a particular aspect. The theme of the Spousal Union of Christ with his Church is very ancient and the Fathers of the Church have developed eloquently this theme. The fourth century Syriac Father Aphrahat writes about Christ, the Bridegroom (hatna) and the Church, the Bride (kalta): "He is the Bridegroom and the apostles are the Betrothers, and we are the Bride; let us prepare our dowry." (Demonstration 14, 681-684 of the Edition of Parisot, Paris, 1894, 1907). According to him the Church is called "the Bride adorned" (kalta msabata) (ibid., p. 680). The Church is looking forward to her eschatological wedding-feast (meshtuta). Even before Aphrahat, Syriac literature has emphasized the importance of this theme, for example the Odes of Solomon has the following text: "Like the arm of the Bridegroom over the Bride, so is my yoke over those who know me; and as the bridal chamber (gnuna) that is spread in the marriage-house, so is my love over those that believe in me." (J.H. Charlesworth, Odes of Solomon, Oxford 1973, p. 143-147). We find the same teaching in the Acts of Thomas of the 3rd century (W. Wright, Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, London 1871, p.176-177). Such teachings are very common in the liturgical traditions of our Church. For example the Prumion for the Ramsho on the Qudos-Idto Sunday reads as follows: "Praise to you, O

heavenly Bridegroom, who out of love betrothed for Yourself the impure daughter of the Gentiles; You who washed her pure with the hyssop and made her a spotless Bride; You who invited the prophets, apostles and the martyrs for her marriage; You, who arranged a great wedding feast for her; to You it is fitting that we offer this evening at all festivals, at all times and moments and seasons and throughout all our life-time, praise, glory and adoration," amin.

The God whom Jesus Christ revealed to us is a God of relationship. St. John qualifies him as Love. In the same way, in everyone and with everyone, God wants this relationship. So is his relationship to his bride, the Church. Hence, those who are in the Church are also called to be in relationship of love and fellowship. They are called to form a family of love and service. The spousal image between Christ and the Church is a great force for us to order all our lives and actions on the basis of love. If we truly understand the image of the Church as the Bride of Christ, then each of us are children of the Church born from the womb of the mother Church which is the baptismal font. One of the greatest risks of today is that the faithful unknowingly take the Church as an organization with its own rules and regulations. Of course, for any society to move forward and survive, it requires peace and harmony. But it has been our common experience that people begin to take Church as a mere organization and its social aspects are more important than the spiritual formation. In one of the exhortations to the Youth, Pope John Paul II exhorted them to take the Church as their own mother. She may have her failings and shortcomings which is because she has children like us, but we need to love her. She is our Mother.



The author of this book has made a study of such a theme and is quite comprehensive. Though there are many images about the Church, the one I like most is this, namely, the Church as the Bride of Christ. In the prayers of the Antiochene Rite, Jesus Christ and His Church are compared with Adam and Eve. Just as Eve was taken from the side of Adam in his sleep, so too while Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, slept on the Cross at Calvary, from his pierced side flew the second Eve, the Church whom He took as His Bride. It is a very powerful image, and the union between Christ and Church assumes that of a most intimate one which is understandable for all.

Today we consider the problems in the Church as her own problems and not as our own. We are increasingly distancing ourselves from the Church. The main reason is because we do not consider this spousal relationship between Christ and the Church serious. This image will help us love our Mother. The images developed by the Fathers are communicating messages. This is to fashion the spiritual and social life of the faithful. Today the Church is undergoing quite many challenges, both from within and outside. For an average person Church is identified with its hierarchy or institutions. Church is often regarded as something that is outside and not part of one's own being. This is because of the false image of the Church. Church is to be understood not in terms of social categories or philosophical categories. It is to be understood in terms of a living experience and the image of the spousal union is quite evocative and a catechesis on this basis will give a new boost to Christian life and witnessing.



It is in this context that I appreciate the usefulness of the study of the author. I am happy that the author has sufficiently gone deep into the matter to get the merit of being a scientific doctoral study. I wish that the book may find wider appreciation among theologians and liturgists, especially among those engaged in correct ecclesiological understanding. In this year when we celebrate the Jubilee of the Second Vatican Council, I am particularly happy that a book of this sort is being published. In fact the greatest contribution of the Second Vatican Council is its ecclesiological understanding. If we have a correct understanding of the Church, the rest is easier and will fall in line.

**+ Thomas Mar Koorilos**  
Archbishop of Tiruvalla,  
Chairman, Synodal Commission for Liturgy  
Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

## APPRAISAL

Every Christian marriage is marriage "in Christ" (1 Cor 7:39). Jesus Christ disclosed what was the original plan of God regarding marriage "from the very beginning", and cured of its previous defects (Mk 10: 5-9). He restored all its dignity and enforced the requirements of "unity and indissolubility" of marriage bond. He sanctified the state of life by including it in the mystery of love which unites the Redeemer with the Church. The rule which regulates Christian marriage is the rule of Love after the manner of Christ (Eph 5: 21-33). Hence Christian marriage is a "Great Mystery" (Eph 5:32) within the "Mystery of the Church".

While the Western theology treats marriage as a contract between two individuals, the Eastern theology considers the sacrament of marriage as a covenant of love among three persons: God, man and woman. God being "Love", He is the font that assures perennial supply of love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Marriage is a "call" to holiness, as other "calls" in the Church are. Every Christian family which lives the "spousal love" in its integrity builds up the Church. Hence every Christian family has a "missionary" character in manifesting Christ's love through their lives.

Like any other sacrament, the sacrament of marriage is also focused on the Eucharist. That is why Tertullian, a Church Father who lived in the second century A. D., wrote: marriage "is arranged by the Church, confirmed by the Eucharist, sealed

by the blessing, and inscribed in heaven by the angels" (Ad Uxorem, II, 8: 6-9).

I had the happiness of attending the defense of the thesis of Rev. Dr. Isaac Parappallil in Rome. The dissertation was very well appreciated by his Directors and by all present there. We see its merit, especially because of the elucidation of symbols and allusions from the Sacred Scripture. That is done against the background of the teaching of Oriental Fathers and Theology. It is a good methodology to make textual analysis of our liturgy and derive a theology out of it. This Book which is published in the "Year of Faith" will certainly enhance our understanding of the Church and its Mysteries, the sacraments. I wish the author every success, and expect many more contributions from him for the theological growth of the Malankara Church.

**+ Abraham Mar Julios**  
Bishop of Moovattupuzha,  
Chairman, Synodal Commission  
for Theology & Theological Publications,  
Syro-Malankara Catholic Church





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## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)
AAA	Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
Ad.Pol.	<i>Ad Policarp</i> (Ignatius of Antioch)
Ad.Smyr.	<i>Ad Smyrnesi</i> (Ignatius of Antioch)
AG	<i>Ad gentes divinitus</i> (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity)
AJT	<i>Acts of Judas Thomas</i>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CC	<i>Casti Connubii</i> (Encyclical on Christian Marriage)
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCEO	Codex Canonicum Ecclesiarum Orientalium
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
CIIS	Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies
CNis	<i>Carmina Nisibena</i> (Ephrem), ed. & German trans., E. BECK, CSCO 218-219/Scr.Syr. 92-93, Louvain, 1961; CSCO 240-241/Scr.Syr. 102-103, Louvain, 1963.
CO	<i>Christian Orient</i>
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
Dem.	<i>Demonstrationes</i> (Aphrahat), R. GRAFFIN, Syriac Text edited and Latin trans. by J. PARISOT, PS I (1894); PS II (1907), Instituti Francisci Typographi, Parisiis.
Diat.	<i>Diatessaron</i> (Ephrem) ed. & trans. L. LELOIR, <i>Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant</i> , Texte Syriaque, CBM 8, Dublin, 1963; French trans. of Syriac and Armenian by L. LELOIR, SCH 121, Paris, 1966.
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DS	Denzinger-Schönmetzer, <i>Enchiridion Symbolorum</i>
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i> (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)
EC	Ephrem, <i>Evangelium Concordans</i> i.e. <i>Diatessaron</i>
EC Arm.	Ephrem, <i>Commentaire l'Évangile Concordant</i> , version arménienne, ed. Leloir L ; CSCO 137 & 145 (1954-55).



- ECQ *Eastern Churches Quarterly*  
 ECR *Eastern Churches Review*  
 EC Syr. *Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant (Texte Syriaque)*  
 ed. Leloir L., Chester Beatty Monographs 8, Dublin,  
 1963.
- ET English Translation  
 Fasc. Fascicule  
 FC *Familiaris Consortio* (Apostolic Exhortation on the role  
 of the Christian Family in the Modern World).  
 FH Festal Homilies (Jacob of Serugh)  
 GCS Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten  
 (drei) Jahrhunderte.  
 GL *Geist und Leben*  
 GS *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church  
 in the Modern World).  
 GT German Translation  
 HArm. *Hymnes de S. Ephrem conservées en version  
 arménienne*, Latin trans. L.MARIES & C. MERCIER,  
 PO 30, Paris, 1961.
- HcHaer. *Hymnen Contra Haereses* (Ephrem) ed. & German  
 trans., E. BECK, CSCO 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77,  
 Louvain, 1957.
- HEccl. *Hymnen de Ecclesia* (Ephrem) ed. & German trans., E.  
 BECK, CSCO 198-199/Scr.Syr. 84-85, Louvain, 1960.
- HFid. *Hymnen de Fide* (Ephrem) ed. & German trans., E.  
 BECK, CSCO 154-155/Scr.Syr. 73-74, Louvain, 1955.
- HNat. *Hymnen de Nativitate* (Ephrem) ed. & German trans.,  
 E. BECK, CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, Louvain,  
 1959.
- Hom. Homily  
 HParad. *Hymnen de Paradiso* (Ephrem) ed. & German trans., E.  
 BECK, CSCO 174-175/Scr.Syr. 78-79, Louvain, 1957.
- HS Homiliae Selectae (Jacob of Serugh)  
 HV *Humanae Vitae* (Encyclical on Human Life)  
 HVirg. *Hymnen de Virginitate* (Ephrem) ed. & German trans.,  
 E. BECK, CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, Louvain,  
 1962.
- IThQ *Irish Theological Quarterly*

JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JD	<i>Jeeva Dhara</i>
JIH	<i>Journal of Indian History</i>
JLW	Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)
LGr.	<i>Liber Graduum</i>
Mal.	Malayalam
MLM	Malankara Liturgy of Marriage
NBA	Nuova Biblioteca Augustiniana
NPNF	Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers
OC	Oriens Christianus
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OE	<i>Orientalium Ecclesiarum</i> (Decree on the Oriental Catholic Churches)
OIRS	Oriental Institute of Religious Studies
OJRS	<i>Ohio Journal of Religious Studies</i>
OR	<i>L'Osservatore Romano</i>
OS	<i>L'Orient Syrien</i>
ParOr.	<i>Parole de l'Orient</i>
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PIO	Pontificio Istituto Orientale (=Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum)
PL	Patrologia Latina
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PS	Patrologia Syriaca
RO	Ritus Orientalium
RSPHTh.	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum concilium</i> (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy).
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
Scr.Syr.	Scriptores Syriac
SCS	<i>Syrian Churches Series</i>
SDN	<i>Sermo de Domino Nostro</i> (Ephrem) ed. & German trans., E. BECK, CSCO 270-271/Scr.Syr. 116-117, Louvain, 1966.



SEERI	St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute
SEERICC	St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute Correspondence Course
SFid.	<i>Sermones de Fide</i> (Ephrem) ed. & German trans., E. BECK, CSCO 212-213/Scr.Syr. 88-89, Louvain, 1961.
SL	<i>Studia Liturgica</i>
Sog.	<i>Sogviti</i>
SPM	<i>Studia Patristica Mediolanensia</i>
SROC	<i>Studi e Ricerche sull'Oriente Cristiano</i>
ST	Syriac Text
StT	Studi e Testi
Syr.	Syriac
ThD	<i>Theology Digest</i>
Tom.	Tomus
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> (Decree on Ecumenism)
Vat. Syr.	Vatican Syriac
WW	<i>Word and Worship</i>
ZThK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## GLOSSARY

<i>Agni</i>	(Mal.) Fire
<i>Attîrô</i>	(Syr.) Rich One
<i>Bnay Qyâmâ</i>	(Syr.) Sons of the Covenant. The Proto-monastic tradition of the Syriac churches.
<i>Besrô</i>	(Syr.) Flesh
<i>Bêth gnônô</i>	(Syr.) Bridal chamber
<i>Bô'ûtô</i>	(Syr.) Supplication
<i>Denahô</i>	(Syr.) Epiphany
<i>Demos</i>	(Gk.) People
<i>Eed'to</i>	(Syr.) Church
<i>Ekklêsia</i>	(Gk.) Church
<i>Eniyônô</i>	(Syr.) Antiphon; anthem
<i>Eqbo</i>	(Syr.) A variable termination or a small prayer
<i>Étro</i>	(Syr.) Prayer of incense
<i>Gelyô</i>	(Syr.) Revealed, manifestation
<i>Gânônô</i>	(Syr.) Gardener
<i>Hatnô</i>	(Syr.) Bridegroom
<i>Hatnô šmayyânô</i>	(Syr.) Heavenly Bridegroom
<i>Húdôs i'dtô</i>	(Syr.) Dedication of the Church
<i>Huppâh</i>	(Hb.) Tent or bridal chamber
<i>Ihîdâyô</i>	(Syr.) Single one, celibate, only begotten
<i>Ihîdâyûthô</i>	(Syr.) Singleness, solitary
<i>Kalabham</i>	(Mal.) A special colour powder
<i>Kalltô</i>	(Syr.) Bride



<i>Kasyô</i>	(Syr.) Hidden One
<i>Kattanar</i>	(Mal.) Priest
<i>Kephalê</i>	(Gk.) Head
<i>Ketûbâh</i>	(Hb.) Writ or document
<i>Kristos</i>	(Gk.) Christ
<i>Kumkum</i>	(Mal.) Colour mark made on the forehead of the married woman
<i>Lbaš pagrô</i>	(Syr.) Put on the body
<i>Liliyo</i>	(Syr.) Night prayer
<i>Mâdrôsô</i>	(Syr.) Exposition of a doctrinal hymn
<i>Malankara</i>	(Mal.) lit. Land of hills; one of the traditional names of the Thomas Christians in Kerala. Now it generally means the Churches of Thomas Christians which follow the West Syrian or Antiochene liturgy.
<i>Mantrakôti</i>	(Mal.) Nuptial special garment used as veil
<i>Mârgamkali</i>	(Mal.) Song of the Way
<i>Metbasrômûtô</i>	(Syr.) Incarnation
<i>Mkâr</i>	(Syr.) To marry
<i>Mkîrâ</i>	(Syr.) Bridegroom
<i>Mkîrta</i>	(Syr.) Betrothed, bride
<i>Mkîrûtô</i>	(Syr.) Betrothal
<i>Mohar</i>	(Hb.) Marriage price
<i>Mysterion</i>	(Gk.) Mystery
<i>Nuhro</i>	(Syr.) Light
<i>Padiola</i>	(Mal.) A document

<i>Pânigrahana</i>	(Mal.) Joining of hands
<i>Pathivratha</i>	(Mal.) Chaste woman
<i>Pênqîô</i>	(Syr.) Book of the prayer services of the churches of Antiochene Rite for Sundays and feast days.
<i>Prômiûn</i>	(Syr.) Preface for a prayer called <i>Sêdrô</i>
<i>Putavakoda</i>	(Mal.) Giving of a nuptial garment
<i>Puthenkoottukar</i>	(Mal.) Separated new group after the <i>Coonan Cross Oath</i> .
<i>Qudîshô</i>	(Syr.) Holy
<i>Qôlô</i>	(Syr.) lit. Voice or tune; a series of short anthems.
<i>Qûdôs i'dtô</i>	(Syr.) Consecration of the Church
<i>Quqliûn</i>	(Syr.) A Cycle of hymns with verses from the Psalms
<i>Qûqôyô</i>	(Syr.) Hymn
<i>Qurbônô</i>	(Syr.) Offering; offering of the Eucharist.
<i>Qyâmtô</i>	(Syr.) Resurrection
<i>Rabbô</i>	(Syr.) Great One
<i>Rôzô/rôze</i>	(Syr.) Symbols, types, mysteries, sacraments, Eucharist
<i>Sêdrô</i>	(Syr.) lit. Series or order; A long series of prayers.
<i>Šemšo</i>	(Syr.) Sun
<i>Šhîmô</i>	(Syr.) Breviary for the weekly cycle
<i>Sôdh</i>	(Hb.) Hidden divine plan
<i>Sôtêr</i>	(Gk.) Saviour



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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Ecclesiology is a branch of theology that tries to give a scientific exposition of the faith of the Church concerning itself. It is the systematic reflection on the origin, nature, characteristics and mission of the Church. This book tries to elaborate the ecclesiological themes present in the Malankara Liturgy of marriage. Thus, ecclesiology is drawn from the liturgical prayers and hymns of the marriage service. Vatican II teaches that ecclesiology can never be separated from liturgy, its highest expression (SC. 10). In this way, there is a strong and mutual relationship between liturgy theology and life. This mutual relation is expressed in the famous axiom 'Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi'. Pius XII affirms that the sacred liturgy is the principal organ of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church'. The Sacred Scriptures and Fathers of the Church presented the inner nature, essence and mystery of the Church through many images and symbols. It has become a significant trend in ecclesiology to approach the mystery and nature of the Church by means of images and symbols. We find that the Syriac Fathers also have applied a number of images and symbols to describe the essence and mysteries of the Church which still have a higher relevance in the modern era. It was the best method widely used by Aphrahat, Ephrem, Narsai

1. Cf. PIUS XII, *Meditator Dei*, AAS 39 (1947) 540-41.



<i>Šubkônô</i>	(Syr.) Reconciliation
<i>Sûgîô</i>	(Syr.) Canticle
<i>Têksô d'kurbô</i>	(Syr.) The Order of the Holy Mass
<i>Thâli/minnukettu</i>	(Mal.) Tying the cord with a cross around the bride's neck
<i>Vâdô dalmînô</i>	(Syr.) Entering to the living port
<i>Vivâha</i>	(Mal.) Marriage
<i>Yaldô</i>	(Syr.) Christmas
<i>Zuôgô</i>	(Syr.) Marriage

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. PIUS XII, *Mediator Dei*, AAS 39 (1947) 540-41.



and the later Syriac writers like Jacob of Serugh. The exposition of these patristic images still remain as a pearl in the theology of the Syriac tradition and liturgy. The images we find in the liturgy of the Syriac Churches show the beauty and attraction of these liturgies.

The purpose of this book is to make a synthesis of the ecclesiology of the MLM in the light of the patristic images found in it. It envisages the theological beauty and the ecclesiological content of the liturgy of marriage. It also furnishes an understanding of the mystery of the sacrament of marriage as a model of the relationship between Christ and His Church. In the liturgical prayers, the MLM offers many striking images with regard to Christ, the Church and marriage. All these images point to something beyond themselves which is eminently theological and ecclesial. Marriage is seen as the spousal union between Christ and the Church. The Church is conceived as the faithful bride of Christ, and Christ as the eternal and heavenly Bridegroom. In this way, this work investigates the ecclesiology of the sacrament of marriage which is interspersed in patristic symbols and images. Since this work is limited to the ecclesiological themes expressed through various patristic images and symbols, a structural analysis of the MLM is not attempted. This is neither a textual nor an analytical study, but only an approach to a "liturgical ecclesiology". Studies of patristic symbols and images have been numerous and we are not able to probe deeply into that ocean of all the Syriac patristic literature. This work is limited only to the major patristic images found in the MLM. But we will make occasional references to other Malankara liturgical prayers also. Since it is a liturgical study of the marriage



service, it is not possible to mention all the other symbols and images which had developed in the past two thousand years of its history. In short, the work is based on the ecclesial and marital images which are mentioned in the MLM.

This book consists of four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the historical antecedents of the MLM. It deals with the historical part in which the Jewish influence of the Christian liturgy of marriage, genesis and formation of Christian marriage, the early Christians and their marriage ceremonies in the first three centuries, the development of the Christian marriage ceremony from the fourth to the present period, the history and Antiochene tradition of the Malankara liturgy, the origin and development of the MLM are discussed. This chapter includes also the doctrine of marriage in early Syrian literary sources and Fathers. The aim of this chapter is to prepare the reader to comprehend the historical background of the Christian marriage service, particularly of the Malankara liturgy, and its antecedents of Jewish, Syriac and Indian influences. The next chapter 'The theology of the Spousal Union between Christ and the Church' examines the general theology of Christian marriage. This chapter includes themes such as the importance of symbolism in theology, conjugal symbolism in the Sacred Scripture, conjugal symbolism of Christ and the Church expressed in the MLM, spousal union as 'great mystery', spousal union as 'one flesh' image, and spousal union as a sacrament in theology. This chapter highlights the spousal union between Christ and the Church which is the exemplar of every Christian marriage. On the basis of the historical and theological antecedents presented in the previous chapters, we concentrate in the following



chapters on the symbolic theology of the important patristic images and symbols, and the ecclesiology inherent in them. These images and symbols are always related to the biblical background and referred to the doctrine of the Church. They bestow a rich biblical interpretation and theology, and typological meanings of sacred things for the readers. The images have a strong relation between the symbolic nature of a thing and its implied theological richness. In this way, the third chapter analyses the important patristic themes found in the MLM such as Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, Christ's baptism in Jordan as the bridal bath and the betrothal of the Church, Christ married the Church on the cross, Christ gave His blood as the dowry to the Church, Christ gave her His body and blood as ring, and Christ the Bridegroom prepares the bridal chamber for the Church. The chapter also discusses the christological dimension of marriage by presenting Christ as the true and righteous Bridegroom of the Church who is the real model for every Christian marriage.

The final chapter discusses the ecclesiological dimension of the MLM. This chapter consists of themes such as the Church in the Syriac tradition, the ecclesiology of the Syriac tradition, the Church as the bride of Christ, the other related ecclesial images, the Church as the bride of Christ in Aphrahat, Ephrem and in Jacob of Serugh, the Church as the bride of Christ in other writings, and the doctrine of the birth of Church from the side of Christ. The other important themes discussed are that MLM as a 'locus ecclesiologicus', and the idea 'marriage too makes the Church'. These themes offer numerous positive points to characterize the ecclesiological dimension of marriage. Here, we find that the Christian family,

in which the spouses by carrying out the activities of the Church and participating in the mission of the Church, acts as a 'Church in miniature'. In this way, every Christian marriage assumes an ecclesiological structure and manifests its ecclesial mission. In short, the book analyses and synthesises the ecclesiological dimension of marriage, and points out some of the insights which could be further elaborated.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

# **CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CELEBRATION AND ITS HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS**

### **Introduction**

The liturgy and sacraments play an important role in the life of the Christian community because they are deeply related to the economy of salvation. In order to understand the sacraments, we need a more comprehensive theology of sacraments which should derive from reflection on the forms of celebration of each rite. The liturgy and sacraments are very closely inter-related. When we say that marriage is a sacrament, it implies that God Himself does something, and gives tangible proof of His divine action. Marriage is a particular relationship subject to God's active involvement in creation and its survival. Marriage is natural in purpose, but divine in origin. It is sacred because the divine Author willed it to perpetuate His creative act. Thus, marriage as something willed by God is more deeply rooted in man's religious consciousness. God's intent in founding marriage is a relationship of a man and a woman bound together for life. Christ elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament and He took a very strong position in support of the

marital relationship as a permanent 'togetherness'. This absolute position of Christ was a matter of a relationship having God as its active creator. "Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined" (Mk 10:9). This indissoluble nature of marriage is the divine will. Since marriage is a divine institution and a gift of creation, one must try to discover God's divine revelation concerning its saving purpose, its biblical background, religious and ecclesial significance and its historical development.

In order to obtain a clear understanding, it may be pertinent to recall various antecedents and elements common to the development of the Christian marriage ceremony. This chapter investigates the historical – the Jewish, Syrian and Indian – antecedents of the Christian marriage rite and in a particular manner that of the Malankara liturgy. This chapter gives a brief discussion about the Jewish influence on the Christian marriage ceremony, the origin and development of the present Christian marriage ceremony, its Jewish background, formation of its marriage liturgy, the concept on marriage in the Syriac literary sources and Fathers.

### **1.1. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND ITS JEWISH ANTECEDENTS**

Christianity is Jewish in origin. Therefore, the background of the present Christian liturgy is largely related to Jewish worship. Whatever is its origin, the Christian worship has its own newness too. It is not an imitation of what we have acquired and possessed. R. Taft defines it beautifully in the following way:



"Christian worship is not how we seek to contact God; it is a celebration of how God has touched us, has united us to Himself and is ever present to us and dwelling in us. It is not reaching out for a distant reality but a joyful celebration of a salvation that is just as real and active in the ritual celebration as it was in the historical event, though in sacramental, not natural form. It is ritual perfected by divine realism: ritual in which the symbolic action is not a memorial of the past, but a participation in the eternally present salvific Pasch of Christ".<sup>1</sup>

"The originality of Christianity is seen in its worship, but so is the traditional, Jewish character of Christianity".<sup>2</sup> A good number of the liturgiologists recognize that the Jewish liturgy and its various elements have left many marks of its influence on early forms of Christian worship and ultimately on Christian liturgy. Traditions from the way of the life of the pious Jews and the heritage of the Synagogue influenced the Christian liturgy, especially in its structure and stylisation of the prayers. In this way, Christian liturgy is intimately related with Jewish background, religion and culture. Thus, in order to understand the liturgy of present Christian marriage, we

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<sup>1</sup> R. F. TAFT, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., PIO, Rome, 1997, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> R. T. BECKWITH, "The Jewish Background to Christian Worship", J. CHESLYN et al. (eds.), *The Study of Liturgy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1978, p. 39. The early form of the Christian worship was very much influenced by the Jewish liturgy because the early Christians continued to worship for a long time in their traditional way; cf. F. HAHN, *The Worship of the Early Church*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1973, p. 13; W. O. E. OESTERLEY, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, P. Smith, Cloucester, 1965, pp. 84-90; J. H. SRAWLEY, *The Early History of the Liturgy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 33-42.



need to go to the Jewish sources and to make a study of the Jewish tribal marriage and the Jewish proper marriage rite.

### **1.1.1. The Jewish Tribal Marriage Ceremony**

There are many references about the details of the Jewish tribal marriage form. We find that the bride was specially anointed, richly dressed and adorned with many jewel-ornaments and both the bride and bridegroom were surrounded by the unmarried companions. The bride's procession to the bridegroom was accompanied by music and singing. The marriage feast was celebrated in the home of the bridegroom and the guests were expected to wear special wedding garments. There were some special marriage-benedictions also connected with the marriage ceremony. The bride was dressed by her family and bride-maids. The ritual of the cup of wine shared by the bride and bridegroom at the betrothal, signified their personal mutual consent for cohabitation and to the passage of the bride from the virginal state to the married. There was an obligatory period for waiting and this was considered as a time for preparation and for instruction. Though there were many reasons for this waiting period, it was dropped in the late eleventh century and now betrothal and marriage are celebrated as a single ceremony.<sup>3</sup> Synthesising all these elements and customs described above, we may summarize the Jewish-tribal marriage in the form of the schema given below:

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. SCHWERDTFEGER, *Ethnological Sources of the Christian Marriage-Ceremony*, Salesian Printing House, Stockholm, 1982, p. 89.



**Jewish Tribal Marriage Ceremony**

- the conclusion of the marriage contract
- ritual gift to the bride (ring or coin)
- shared cup with benedictions
- dressing of bride and bridegroom
- departure of bride from her own house
- bridal procession
- welcome of bride at bridegroom's house
- benediction for fertility

Most of the tribal societies maintained the general practice of having two categories of marriage celebrations: the superior or first-class marriage between two members of a social group; and the inferior or a second-class marriage to a concubine. In both these categories, the rite prescribed the need of giving conscious consent. It could be either personal or social which includes the understanding of the consequences of that consent. Social consent was also the social recognition given to such marital-union. In addition to the first-class and the second-class marriages, there existed also the so-called 'no socially recognized marriage' which consisted of personal consent (secret marriage), and there was no social consent and therefore no social recognition. The first-class marriage type was the only one to be celebrated by a ceremony in which the society expressed its full approval, consent and recognition of the union. The present ceremony of marriage developed from these first-class marriage unions.

At the same time, it was also possible for an outsider to become an Israelite provided the concerned person accepts



the Israelite laws and customs. In principle, marriage with an outsider was not normally accepted. It was not only unacceptable, but considered also as betrayal of Yahweh and equated with idolatry (Jg 3:6). All of the Jewish patriarchs married within their own close kin or clan. Abraham married his half-sister, Sarah. They had the same father but different mothers (Gen 20:12). Abraham's brother, Nahor, married his brother's daughter (Gen 11:29). Isaac married the granddaughter of Abraham's brother (Gen 24:15). Jacob married the daughters of his mother's brother (Gen 29). But we find the taking of foreign wives also. Abraham tries to obtain a foreign-wife for Isaac (Gen 24:3-4). Esau, Jacob's older twin brother, married two foreign women, against the wishes of his parents (Gen 26:34-35). But the marriage of Jacob with Rachel and Lea is characterised as a legitimate marriage within the clan-structure. At the same time, his 'marriage' with two concubines were without ceremony and that union was only a fact of cohabitation (Gen 29-30). We find certain exceptions also to the general rule in the case of Joseph, Juda, Samson, Moses, Solomon etc. Here it is argued that a first-class marriage was contracted between an Israelite and a foreigner.<sup>4</sup> The wedding of Samson (Jg Ch. 14) with a foreigner is also considered as a first-class marriage. The Scripture shows

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. SCHWERDTFEGGER, *Ethnological Sources of the Christian Marriage-Ceremony*, pp. 27-28. The first-class marriage was characterised as a legitimate marriage within the clan-structure itself (not with foreigners), which is celebrated by a ceremony in which the society expresses its full approval and recognition for such a union. However, we find some exceptions to this general rule in certain cases. The Biblical passages used in this book are quoted from *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*, Catholic Truth Society – Publishers to the Holy See, London, 1966.



that Yahweh had allowed him to contract this marriage to confound the Philistines. Though the marriage of Moses to Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest, had been displeasing to Yahweh, it was made acceptable because of her acceptance of the Israelite faith and kept Yahweh from killing Moses (Ex 4:24-26).

### 1.1.2. The Jewish Proper Marriage Rite

In Jewish religion, the married state is regarded as a social, moral, and religious ideal, and as a necessary condition of spiritual perfection. For Jews, marriage is a religious duty as the biblical commandment enjoined: 'be fruitful and multiply'.<sup>5</sup> The Rite of marriage in the Jewish religion consists of two parts which were celebrated independently. The first part is the betrothal ceremony. The second part which is the proper marriage allows the cohabitation. The first part took place in the house of the bride and was presided over by the bride's father. The second part was held in the groom's house and was presided over by the groom's father and it culminated in the wedding feast.<sup>6</sup> In the talmudic time also, the marriage custom had two stages: the betrothal and the proper marriage. The separation of the two parts of the liturgy was introduced

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY & G. WIGODER (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 443-44; Z. W. FALK, "Ehe Judentum", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, G. KRAUSE & G. MÜLLER (eds.), Band XIV, W. de Gruyter, Berlin, 1982, pp. 313-18.

<sup>6</sup> M. SEARLE & W. S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1992, p. 25; cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, Augustinus-Verlag, Würzburg, 2003, pp. 29-38, 65-66.



in the form of marriage writ (*ketûbâh*).<sup>7</sup> But these two ceremonies were combined later in postgeonic time into one ritual which is continued still today.

The rabbis considered marriage as a religious rite and as well as a social contract. As a religious act, it was an act of sanctification and as a social contract by which the bride and groom were obliged to take mutual obligations, safeguarded the bride from divorce.<sup>8</sup> There was a custom of giving a marriage price (*môhar*)<sup>9</sup> by the groom to the bride's father. It was an expression of possession of the bride. The rituals and symbolic acts connected with the Jewish marriage ceremony consisted of the benediction over the cup of wine from which the couple drink as a symbol of sharing their life, the giving of a gold ring to the bride by the groom as the conclusion of the betrothal by remembering the rabbinic formula 'behold, thou art consecrated unto me (by this ring, according to the law of Moses and Israel). Every marriage was celebrated only with

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<sup>7</sup> *Ketubah* = writ, a legal document containing a statement of the obligations that the bridegroom undertakes toward his bride, and that in rabbinic law is a pre-requisite to marriage. The oldest known *ketubah* was discovered in the Jewish settlement of Elephantine, dates from 440 BC, while a second century example has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. We find a specific literary reference to a marriage document in Tobit 7:13; cf. R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY & G. WIGODER (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, p. 397.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. E. MILLGRAM, *Jewish Worship*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1971, pp. 326-27.

<sup>9</sup> *Môhar* (Hb.) is the money or its equivalent which the father of the bridegroom or the bridegroom himself paid to the bride's father when the contract of marriage was drawn up (Gen 34:12). In biblical times, the husband acquired the bride by paying a sum of money. This transaction was not considered a purchase of the bride in the strict sense, but it was the money given to bride's father as a dowry. The amount depended on their social standing; cf. L. F. HARTMANN, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, McGraw-Hill Book, New York, 1963, p. 1461.



*ketûbâh* in the presence of some witnesses and it was transmitted to the bride publicly which was formerly a private transaction. The marriage rite consisted in eight blessings (including the opening benediction over the cup of wine) of the bridegroom. The marriage rite was conducted under a *huppâh* (tent or canopy) where rabbis give betrothal benediction as a symbol of the sanctification for the couple's life. Finally, in conclusion of the rituals, there was a breaking of a glass which symbolised that even at the moment of their joys, Jews mourn for the destruction of Zion.<sup>10</sup>

The Jewish wedding celebration involved a public demonstration which was followed by a bridal procession, leading the bride into the groom's canopy where a room had been specially prepared for the newlyweds. The celebration started with the nuptial blessings and ended with the communal wedding feast.<sup>11</sup> In the Jewish marriage there were two distinct parts, and each consisted of three special benedictions. The

<sup>10</sup> Cf. A. E. MILLGRAM, *Jewish Worship*, pp. 328-29. The Breaking of the glass symbolises also the fulfilment of the oath taken by the Hebrews when they were taken to the captivity in 586 B.C. (Ps 137:5-6); cf. also M. SEARLE & W.S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, pp. 26-29. *Huppah* (canopy or bridal chamber) in which a marriage was consummated (Ps 19.5) and in which the nuptials continued for seven days. It is a Jewish custom in which after the meal the couple take their place under the tent or canopy. It is the climax of the celebration and for the first time, they are together. It symbolizes the union of the couple who are going to live together. There the bride is clothed with a veil. This veiling ceremony is still continued in some places; R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY & G. WIGODER (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, p. 341.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. FINKEL, "The Jewish Liturgy of Marriage", E. J. FISHER, *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, Paulist Press, New York, 1990, p. 72. According to Talmud, marriage is an event experienced in a group consists at least 10 persons (basic ecclesiastical unit) as witnesses (B.



first part was connected to the event of marriage with the purpose of creation. The couple viewed their union as the realization of the divine plan and it symbolised the union of Adam and Eve. The blessings which were recited over the cup of wine, were offered in praise of God and it signified the sacramental act. The second part of the liturgy which addressed the couple who share the joy of covenantal experience of the historical community was an eschatological hope also for the return to Zion (Is 54:1, 6, 35:10). When the first part of the marital liturgy referred to the event of creation, the second part referred to the joy of the couple. The former focused on the past and the latter on the future. Thus, these two parts functioned as a bridge of the past with the future in the covenantal union of the present.<sup>12</sup>

The Jewish liturgy of marriage should be understood in the light of biblical thought, in the communal affective response and as revealing the nuptial covenant. The blessings were addressed to God for the continued existence through the union of male and female who share the 'covenant of love'. The prophets always viewed the matrimonial symbolism in the dynamic relationship between God and His people Israel, and they projected the historical relationship in marital terms of covenant. This covenant was expressed as "you shall be for me a people and I shall be a God for you". This vow was a commitment to each other to be forever and it expressed the deuteronomic understanding of the relationship between God

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<sup>12</sup> Even though there were six benedictions from both parts, in Palestine, only three were recited, cf. A. FINKEL, "The Jewish Liturgy of Marriage", E. J. FISHER, *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, pp. 75-77.



and Israel (Deut. 26:17-19). This mutual declaration is very clear in Hosea. God declares, "you are my people" and they respond, "you are my God" (Hos. 2:21-22, 25). Acting against this true dialectic of the covenant was portrayed as adultery and separation. In other words, the transpersonal relationship as in the prophetic symbolism, indicates the sacramental meaning of the interpersonal union.<sup>13</sup>

We find many links between the Christian and the Jewish liturgies of marriage especially in the case of some customs as stated by the text of *Mishnah*. They are the gifts of money (later it has replaced by a document), document of the contract of the union, ceremony of betrothal, crowning of bride and bridegroom, custom of *huppâh* and the glass of wine. The betrothal ceremony was made by giving money as a guarantee for the marriage. Later it was replaced by a ring.<sup>14</sup> The crowning of the bride and groom was an important Jewish custom which is still observed in many Christian liturgies where the couple are crowned by a priest. Chrysostom explains the meaning of this crowning as a symbol of their victory by reaching the door of marriage unconquered.<sup>15</sup> The other customs such as the document of the matrimonial union,

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. FINKEL, "The Jewish Liturgy of Marriage", E. J. FISHER, *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, pp. 65-67. The transpersonal relationship is between the persons and God, whereas interpersonal

ceremony of betrothal, custom of *huppâh* (bridal veil) are also important parts of the Christian marriage liturgy.

## **1.2. GENESIS AND FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN GENERAL**

Throughout its history, the Church has shown in various ways her concern for marriage, concretely manifesting by meaning, legislation and teaching. Given that marriage is a religious institution, the Church was always aware that marriage needs a rite by which the spouses are made one flesh in the Christian community. Since marriage belongs to the order of creation and redemption, for Christians, the celebration of marriage represents an integral part of their liturgical life. Thus, no understanding of the Christian liturgy of marriage is possible unless it is considered in its historical development. The study of the development of the Christian liturgy of marriage will help us to comprehend the existing liturgy in its fullness. The study will help us to rediscover the original form and the basic principles so that it could be suitably restored. In order to understand the present Christian liturgical celebration of marriage, we need to go back to the Christian marriage ceremonies of the first three centuries and the marriage ceremony from the fourth century to the present period.

### **1.2.1. Christian Marriage Ceremonies in the First Three Centuries**

In the first three centuries, the Christian members generally adhered to traditional wedding customs. As there



was no specific Christian form of marriage, the early Christians performed it as did non-Christians. Marriage was a domestic matter being arranged by the two families and celebrated in the two households. The early Christians also continued to follow the local Jewish marriage customs and practices through the customary domestic rites of betrothal, the handing over of the bride and the celebration of the cohabitation. But they considered marriage more as a religious, rather than a mere civil act.<sup>16</sup> Though the Church accepted the subjection of her members to Roman legislation even in the case of marriage, she was aware of the pastoral care and wished to protect the faithful from pagan influences of a harmful kind especially from sacrifices to false gods and so on. That is why, Ignatius of Antioch (ca.35-107) suggested that the marriage should be blessed only 'after the bishop's approval' as a matter of pastoral care and spirituality 'so that marriage may be according to the Lord and not according to the desire'.<sup>17</sup> Here, the clerical intervention was made not as a jurisdictional act but regarded it only as desirable.<sup>18</sup> Tertullian (160-225) also considered marriage made without the knowledge of the bishop as unfavourable.<sup>19</sup> He refers to the custom of the marriage document also among the Christians.<sup>20</sup> In this way, the Church

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. SEARLE & W.S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, p. 253.

<sup>17</sup> IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Ad Polycarpum* 5.2; PG 5, 868. He says again, "*Itidem et fratribus meis denuntia, in nomine Jesu Christi, diligent conjuges suas, sicut Dominus ecclesiam*". The first and earliest non-biblical reference about marriage is found in Ignatius' letter to Polycarp; cf. also V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, pp. 61-65.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1976, pp. 244-45.

<sup>19</sup> TERTULLIAN, *De Pudicitia* 4, PL 2, 986-87.

<sup>20</sup> TERTULLIAN, *Ad Uxorem* 2, 3; PL 1, 1292-93; cf. also V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, pp. 73-74.



was conscious of the sanctity of matrimony and even anxious that the faithful would relate to the unfaithful to the risk of losing the proper faith. Therefore, it can be easily argued that already in the early centuries, marriages were considered a sacred institution that required the ecclesiastical sanction from the bishop, the head of the community.<sup>21</sup> It is really a positive intervention of the Church in the preparation and celebration of marriage, as a pure and proper liturgical rite. Therefore, without the consent and blessing of the Church, the marriage was not considered a sacred one. Augustine also refers to the same practice.<sup>22</sup> Bishops and priests were obliged to see whether the marriage was celebrated in a Christian manner. There was also the practice that bishops acted as 'marriage brokers' in the light of their pastoral care to prevent mixed marriages. 'Marriage in the presence of the Church' (*in facie ecclesiae*) was not well known and familiar at this time and the priestly intervention was required only in certain exceptional cases (in the marriages of clergy and catechumens). But later this intervention became more widespread.<sup>23</sup>

Christians followed somewhat the traditional and popular customs which were prevalent in the contemporary society associated with marriage. There was no specific religious ceremony to solemnise the union when many married

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. RIGHETTI, *Storia Liturgica*, vol.4, Editrice Ancora Milano, 1964, p.455-56. St. Paul also recalls the attention of the faithful on the sanctity of marriage (I Cor. 7:39).

<sup>22</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Sermo* 332, 4; PL 38, 1463.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 246-49. In the early Church, the bishops had the responsibility of the particular care for the marriages of the orphans who were neglected by the community.



people converted to Christianity. It was believed that their lives were sanctified through the reception of baptism, including the marital state. When the baptized persons got married, there was a separate Church ceremony distinct from the normal civil marriage and it took place in the family circle.

In the first three centuries, marriage was essentially a familial rite and it was celebrated in the family circle. In this context, the father of the family was the priest who gave the blessing of Yahweh and presided over the ceremony. It was the duty of the father of the family to unite the couple in the home. According to the custom, the crowning ceremony was done by the father of the family. There was a special rite for such a celebration with some prayers and hymns. Each family had its own household liturgy with its own rites, prayers, hymns and sacrifices.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the early Christians also considered marriage as a family affair in line with the Jewish custom. Therefore, marriage was a sacred event with its own household liturgy and prayers. The early Christians adopted and inherited many marital rites from the surrounding cultures and traditions such as the joining of hands, giving of the veil, blessing, crowning and so on. They believed that the marriage bond is confirmed and blessed by none other than God. The father of the family holds the place of Christ. It was the parents who decided the marriage for their children and it was experienced 'in the Lord' (marrying a fellow Christian according to Christian principles). The presence of any priest or minister was not necessary for a Christian marriage.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 233-34.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. M. METZGER, *History of the Liturgy: The Major Stages*, The Liturgical Press Book, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1997, pp. 62-63.



The personal consent of the couple was considered the essence of the marriage in the ancient times and it had to be expressed before marriage which was admitted by any social group. The Christian couples exchanged their consent in order to remain monogamous because the Christian Church did not permit any type of polygamy which was sometimes permitted by local social customs. The couple were exhorted by the Christian Church to remain together until death and, therefore, the union is indissoluble. In the primitive period, the personal consent was affirmed through the acceptance of the ritual gift. But in the juridical point of view, the verbal expression of the consent was stronger and better than the symbolic acceptance of the ritual gift.

### **1.2.2. Christian Marriage Ceremony from the Fourth Century to the Present Period**

The fourth century is considered as the formative era of Christian liturgy of marriage like that of the development of the liturgy of baptism, the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours and so forth. From the fourth century, it became customary for marriages to be blessed by a priest. We find here a sequence of betrothal and marriage, a formal liturgy for marriage, the intervention of the local ministers even in the domestic context, and finally a solemn nuptial blessing which was accompanied by crowning in the East and the veiling of bride in the West. "By the fourth century, there is evidence of a priestly prayer and blessing for the rite of matrimony. In the Roman Church, the first examples of a nuptial Mass for the celebration of weddings date from the fourth and fifth centuries. The rite of veiling (*velatio*) received a liturgical significance early on".<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> P. HAFFNER, *The Sacramental Mystery*, Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, 1999, pp. 201-02.



In the East, the Fathers such as Basil of Caesarea (330-379), Gregory Nazianzen (329-389), John Chrysostom (347-407) refer to the liturgical elements present in the marriage of the fourth century. In his Canonical writings to Amphilochius of Iconium, Basil of Caesarea speaks of the betrothal and marriage as two separate elements of the rite of marriage. He condemns private marriages and insists that marriage in the Church is a way of making Christ present at the marriage as He was in Cana. He was insisting that marriages should move out of domestic surroundings into the public context of the Church. For Basil, the marriage liturgy consisted of a blessing of the couple which is priestly in character and theological in content. Chrysostom says that it is the consent, not the cohabitation that constitutes the marriage. He lays stress on the mystery of marriage as 'two become one flesh'. He insists on the importance of the crowning which symbolises the couple's victory over passion. He also speaks of the use of rings at the liturgy and the presence of the priest for the blessing. Chrysostom insists that the faithful must ask the benediction of the bishop for their marriage so that the new house be free from the traps of the demons and for the prosperity of a fertile life.<sup>27</sup> If crowning was an Eastern norm in the marriage, the veiling takes over as an integral part in the West. Pope Siricius I (+399) insisted that the brides must be veiled which is associated with the blessing given by the

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *In Genesim, hom.* 48; PG 54, 434-36; cf. W. S. KENNETH, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, Pueblo Publishing Company, New York, 1987, pp. 20-21. In the East, the ecclesial dimension of marriage was very strong. The betrothal and marriage are separate, and both ideally under the Church auspices.



priest.<sup>28</sup> Pope Innocent I (+417) insists on the need for marriages to be celebrated in Church and before a priest, with the priestly blessing given and the bride veiled.<sup>29</sup> But Augustine speaks of marriage as not merely a 'joining', but a *sacramentum*. He gives three reasons for marriage, namely *fides* (fidelity), *proles* (offspring), and *sacramentum* (mystery).<sup>30</sup>

We find the emergence of some paraliturgical rituals or non-obligatory ecclesiastical liturgy connected with marriage especially the priestly blessing in the fourth century. From this time onwards, there was an increasing emphasis placed on the Church aspect of the marriage contract with some liturgical ceremonies. Ambrosiaster refers to the liturgical celebration of marriage in the churches of Rome and Italy taking place at the time of Pope Damasus (366-384).<sup>31</sup> He says

<sup>28</sup> Cf. POPE SIRICIUS I, *Epistolae ad episcopos Gallos*; PL 13, 1182-83; "*De coniugali autem velatione requisiti*"; *Ep. ad Himerium* 4; PL 13, 1136; cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, p. 102. The veiling of the brides was the Church's official recognition and confirmation of the married life.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. POPE INNOCENT I, *Epist ad Victricium*, c. 4-6; PL 20, 473-75; cf. M. RIGHETTI, *Storia Liturgica*, vol.4, p.456.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, i-ii; PL 44, 420; *De bono coniugali*, 32; PL 40, 394; W.S. KENNETH, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, pp. 22-23. Augustine alludes repeatedly to Gen 1:28, and the connection between the blessing of Adam and Eve and the procreation of children. This idea is later expressed in the Encyclical, *Casti connubii* of Pius XI (31 Dec. 1930); cf. *AAS* 22 (1930) 541-73; H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, Edizione Dehoniane, Bologna, 1996, pp. 1294-1300.

<sup>31</sup> AMBROSIASTER, *Comm. in Epist. I ad Cor*, 7, 40; PL 17, 225. In this we find that Christians greatly appreciated the presence of a bishop or of a priest in their marriage feasts. Ambrosiaster provides the sources of evidences of the Roman liturgy of marriage; cf. also AMBROSIASTER, *Liber quaestionum novi et veteris Testamenti*; CSEL 50, 400: 11-14. Here, Ambrosiaster refers to the ceremonies such as prayers and blessing by the priest or bishop.



that marriage was celebrated by God Himself in heaven.<sup>32</sup> We find evidence for the marriage blessing which was accompanied by liturgical actions that in Rome and Italy took the form of the veiling of the bride by the priest.<sup>33</sup> As a result of this, the 'veiling by the priest' and the 'marriage blessing' became almost synonymous.<sup>34</sup> In this way, from the fourth century there developed a Christian rite for marriage. The fathers of the family as presiders of the marriage rites were subsequently replaced by consecrated ministers. The matrimonial ceremony (*nuptiarum celebritas*) is normally celebrated in the Church in the presence of the bishop with the celebration of the Eucharist, during which the couple make the offering and receive communion. The priestly benediction was indispensable for the marriage. Pope Innocent I says "*quae per sacerdotem super nubentes imponitur*".<sup>35</sup> The couple were given a crown on their head, which signifies the victory over the flesh and the splendour of the virginity of the spouse.

Even though the Merovingians and Carolingians did not transfer the jurisdictional administration of marriage to the Church, we find that in the tenth century that the kings lost much of their power. Therefore, the transference of the jurisdictional power from the State into the hands of the Church in matrimonial affairs came in the eleventh century. In the exercise of her jurisdictional power, the Church was mainly

<sup>32</sup> AMBROSIASTER, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Corinthos Primam*, 7, 40; PL 17, 238.

<sup>33</sup> *Epistola ad Siricius I*, PL 16, 1171.

<sup>34</sup> E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 261. This ceremony took place in the church.

<sup>35</sup> POPE INNOCENT I, *Epistolam IV ad Himerium*, PL, 34, 632. cf. M. RIGHETTI, *Storia Liturgica*, vol.4, p. 457; M. SEARLE & W.S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, pp. 254-56.



concerned with judging the validity of marriage contracts and demanded that the mutual consent to marry should be public. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Church obtained complete jurisdiction in matrimonial affairs especially with regard to the considerable functions assumed by the priest. It was the priest who conducted the marriage ceremony and he even took over the function of the father in handing over the bride. From this practice, there came the liturgical formula that "*et ego (priest) coniungo vos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*". The Church marriage in the middle ages consisted of the following elements: (1) the priest asking the bride and bridegroom for their consent at the entrance of the church, (2) the parents of the bride handing over their daughter to the bridegroom, (3) giving of the dowry (4) giving of the ring and the priest's marriage blessing, (5) processing to the Church for the nuptial mass, (6) the veiling ceremony and (7) the separate blessing. Many practices which were proper to the secular society such as the ring, dowry, the veiling and so forth were fully integrated into the liturgy. Though marriage was associated with the Eucharistic celebration in the Church of Rome from the fifth century onwards, we find that only in the eleventh century marriage was called as *sacramentum*.<sup>36</sup> Peter Lombard (1095-1160) included marriage in his list of seven sacraments, referring to it as the mystery of union between Christ and the Church.<sup>37</sup> The Fourth Council of Lateran (1215), summoned by Innocent III made limitation of

<sup>36</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 274-79. There was also a custom of giving kiss of peace by the priest to the bridegroom which was passed by the husband to his wife.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. P. LOMBARD, *IV Sent.*, d. 26, c.6 ; d. 27, c.2-3 ; d. 28, c.2. Peter Lombard considers marriage as a sacrament of the unity of Christ and His Church.



marriage impediments and prohibited clandestine marriages.<sup>38</sup> We have seen that for centuries, Christians married either privately or in the family circle. Later through the historical process, they appreciated the religious meaning to marriage and accepted it as an important part of the Church life.

Origin and Different Phases in the Ritualization of the Marriage Liturgy <sup>39</sup>		
Talmudic Jewish	Early Christian	Later Period
Betrothal	Betrothal	Betrothal
Contract	Crowns (?)	Holy Mass
Evening Feast at the Groom's house	Domestic rite	Special readings
Seven Blessings	Blessings	Special prayers giving of the Ring Crowning Blessing

### 1.2.3. The Origin of the Marriage Ceremony among the Thomas Christians

The marriage ceremony of the Thomas Christians has been developed through a long process. The present liturgy of the marriage ceremony has been influenced by Jewish, Syriac and Hindu customs. Given that almost all the manuscripts relating to the liturgy of the ancient Christian community were

<sup>38</sup> In clandestine marriages, the Church had no supervision over possible impediments to the marriage. Even in cases where a priest was present at a marriage which did not take place 'in front of the entrance to the Church (*in facie Ecclesiae*), such marriages were called clandestine (IV Lateran Council, can. 50-52)

<sup>39</sup> This chart is prepared according to the chart made by W. S. KENNETH in his book, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, p. 238.

destroyed after the Synod of Diamper, no important manuscripts dating before the 16<sup>th</sup> century have been preserved. At the same time, some of the available shreds of evidence help us to reconstruct the marriage ceremony among the Malabar Christians. "From the writings of authors like Abdiso (13<sup>th</sup> C.), we get an idea about the matrimonial observances which had been influenced not a little by Brahmin and Jewish customs".<sup>40</sup>

The ancient Christian community of Kerala had a life-style conditioned in part by values imbibed from the Oriental or Syriac traditions, and in part by the Hindu traditions of its proximate environment especially in the matter of dress, ornaments, language, food and so on. The marriage ritual of the ancient Thomas Christians allowed the marriage only within the community. Early marriage customs show that the marriage was celebrated with a great festivity, accompanied by religious ritual. In the marriage festivals, the Thomas Christians displayed their privileges and noble status which were associated with the bridal procession, using the ornamental umbrella, accompanied by musicians, lamp-bearers and elephants. Though the Thomas Christians preferred Sunday as the day for marriage, Monday and Thursday also became acceptable. The priest had a central role in the marriage

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<sup>40</sup> J. HILARION, "The Sacraments of the Malabar Church before 1400 A.D.", G. MENACHERRY (ed.), *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, vol. 2, B. N. K. Press, Madras, India, 1973, p. 116. The Christians adapted many elements such as tying a cord with a gold cross around the bride's neck by the husband (thâli or minnu). the wedding cloth puts upon the bride's head which corresponds to the bridal veil (mantrakôti) are from the customs of Brahmins, the high-caste Hindus.



rite, and the blessing of the marriage was done outside the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>41</sup>

We have already seen that Christian marriage ceremony has adapted many local traditions and customs. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the Roman Church adapted the Roman customs, the Eastern churches generally structured their liturgies after the Jewish customs. The Syrian community in India also maintained the Jewish cultural and theological heritage. The Syrian Churches are in direct link with the Jewish tradition. The roots of Syrian Christianity are found in Judeo-Christian groups of the sub-apostolic period. Syrian Churches still have many ancient songs which have a Jewish-Syrian musical background. For example, "Song of the Way" (*mārgamkali*) narrates the arrival of St. Thomas, his missionary work, miracles performed and martyrdom.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> CE. J. A. FONSECA, *Marriage in India in a Christian Perspective: A Historical, Social, Theological Investigation*, Academia Alfonsiana, Roma, 1988, pp. 182-85; 190-93. Later, the forces came on the Christians by the decision that the Roman Rite be translated into Syriac and followed in every respect. As a result, marriage came to be celebrated during Mass in some Oriental Rites, with a nuptial blessing and a Nuptial Mass, as prevailed in the Latin Rite. But, the arrival of the Dutch (1596) was welcomed by the Thomas Christians, who considered them as saviours from Portuguese. The Dutch encouraged the reintroduction of marriage for the priests (*kamunary*), on whom the Portuguese had imposed celibacy. This practice is still followed among the priests of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox and Jacobite churches, while the Malankara Catholic priests resemble the marriage law of the Latin Church and follow the practice of celibacy.

<sup>42</sup> CE. J. VELLIAN, "Syriac Influence on the Christian Folk Songs of Kerala with special reference to Marriage Songs", *Symposium Syriacum VII*, *OCC* 256 (1998) 717-24. For the references to St. Thomas' arrival in India, cf. A. F. J. KELLEN (ed.), *The Acts of Thomas*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2003, pp. 62-80. The word "mārgam" (Mal.) means the way. 'Thomas Marga' (the way or Law of Thomas) which describes the ecclesial, political and social life, in fact the whole tradition of the Tho-



Christianity in Kerala has adapted some Hindu customs into its liturgy such as *Thâlikettu/minnukettu* (tying a cord with gold cross around the bride's neck by the husband) and *Manthrakôti* (a nuptial special garment used as veil with which the bridegroom covers the head of the bride).<sup>43</sup> The Thomas Christians retained these customs as the most symbolic gestures of their wedding services. The priest blesses the *minnu/thâli* made with a cross and the bridegroom ties it on the neck of the bride. The song, sung during this time indicates that the cross is the sign of union and the symbol of victory. This cross or *minnu* is considered sacred and as the symbol of the indissolubility of marriage.<sup>44</sup> Christians adopted the Hindu marriage rite *manthrakôti* which corresponds to the bridal veil of many Eastern cultures. The *mantrakôti* is a typical combination of the Jewish and Indian customs. As we have already seen, the Jews had the custom of *huppah* (bridal chamber). The rite of *pennukettal* (marrying a woman), modelled on the South Indian *thâlikettukalyânânam*, is also a symbolic marriage rite of the Christians. The Hindu rite of

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mas Christians, is the sum total of the Christian life as expressed in the liturgical tradition and day-to-day life of the Thomas Christians. It constitutes of the liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline; cf. P. VAZHEEPARAMPIL, "Monasticism in the Malabar Church", E. G. FARRUGIA (ed.), *In Search of the Precious Pearl*, PIO, Roma, 2005, p. 180, 188.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. T. PAZHOOR, "ܐܘܪܘܚܐ" (Marriage), L. MOOLAVEETIL (ed.), ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܘܥܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܘܢܐ (Mal.) (Sacraments in the Malankara Church), Bethany Scholasticate, Pune, 1980, p. 160. After the tying of the *minnu*, the bridegroom puts over the head of the bride the new cloth which is a symbolic gesture expressing his commitment to her.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. A. S. I. PLACIDUS, *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*, Fonti, Serie II- Fascicolo IX, S. Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Codificazione Canonica Orientale, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1940, pp. 186-88



*pânigrahana* parallels the joining of hands of the couple in the marriage service. Some other Indian rituals such as the lamp representing fire (*Agni*) at the marriage (*vivâha*) which signifies the presence of Christ for the Christians, is also occasionally used in the Christian marriage ceremony.<sup>45</sup>

*Pennu kettuka* was immediately followed by the imposition of the *mantrakôti*, a wedding cloth, upon the head of the bride. This purely secular *sambandham* (marriage rite), celebrated by the Brahmins and Nairs distinct in time from *thâli*-marriage, was adopted by the Christians into the same rite as *pennu kettuka* .... The *mantrakôti* that corresponds to the bridal veil of many Eastern cultures was also preserved for life to be used as a burial shroud.<sup>46</sup>

The ordinary norm for marriage among Rgvedic Aryans was one of monogamous and indissoluble nature. Therefore, in the Hindu marriage system also, the aspect of monogamy and indissolubility is very evident. Social ceremonies connected with marriage such as processions, body ornaments, traditional wedding songs, anointing with *kalabham* are also adapted into Christian ceremonies and rituals in the process of inculturation. In this way, the Indian customs and culture in the Christian marriage celebrations are made evident.<sup>47</sup> Though the Christian community adopted many Hindu social practices connected with marriage ceremonies and family life, they were

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. A. FONSECA, *Marriage in India in a Christian Perspective: A Historical, Social, Theological Investigation*, pp. 186-87.

<sup>46</sup> J. A. FONSECA, *Marriage in India in a Christian Perspective: a Historical, Social, Theological Investigation*, pp. 186-87.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. P. PODIPARA, "Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship", G. MENACHERRY (ed.), *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, vol. 2, p. 111; A. CHERUKARAKKUNNEL, "Indianization among St. Thomas Christians", G. MENACHERRY (ed.), *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, vol. 2, pp. 174-77.



able to remain faithful to its distinctive faith, liturgy and norms of morality. Stress was laid on the practice of monogamy so that together with polygamy, customs like divorce, cross-cousin marriages and the purchase of a husband for an unwed mother, were strictly forbidden. Christian marriage went beyond mere simple practices and social customs. It was regarded as a sacred institution, a sacrament whose holiness demanded unity and indissolubility.

### **1.3. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE**

The Antiochene liturgy is introduced in the Malankara Church by the prelates from the Antiochene Church who had come to Malabar after the Malankara Church entered into communion with the Patriarch of Antioch after the Coonan Cross Oath (1653). It was easy and possible for them to introduce the 'Antiochene rite' especially the liturgy and discipline into the Malankara Church.

#### **1.3.1. The Origin of the West Syrian Liturgy of Marriage**

The present form of the liturgical celebration of the Malankara marriage ceremony has gone through a gradual process of evolution. Though we cannot find enough evidences for the detailed historical documents of the development of the marriage liturgy in the West Syrian tradition, it is believed that the West-Syrian liturgy may have been compiled from the ancient Antiochene tradition by Jacob of Edessa. "Most of the liturgy of St. James in its present form, as we have it today, was established at the hand of Mar Jacob of Edessa (+708), with some minor alterations during the twelfth and thirteenth



centuries".<sup>48</sup> Jacob of Edessa wrote extensively about the marriage ritual especially of the church-ceremony of the marriage.<sup>49</sup> He mentions the ritual of the blessing of the rings (ܕܘܫܘܳܦ ܕܘܫܘܳܦܐ), the blessing of the crowns (ܕܘܫܘܳܦ ܕܘܫܘܳܦܐ), and many other contributions to the liturgy of marriage. In the Order of the whole marriage service, Jacob of Edessa mentions the important elements such as the introduction, oration, *kúklion*, *prómiún*, *sédró*, blessing of the ring, and the metrical oration of Jacob. In the office of the blessing of the nuptial crown, we find the oration, readings, crowning, hymn of Ephrem, metrical oration of Jacob and so on.<sup>50</sup> The Nomo-Canon of Bar Hebraeus (1226-86) mentions the presence of a priest and witness. It insists also upon the

<sup>48</sup> MAR GREGORIOS YOHANNA I., "Introduction to the Sacraments: An Oriental Orthodox Perspective", *Fourth Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition*, J. Marte & G. Wilflinger (eds.), Pro Oriente, Vienna, 2001, pp. 110-12; C. AERATH, *Liturgy and Ethos - A Study based on The Malankara Liturgy of Marriage*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome, 1995, p.110. cf. also H. DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium Coptorum, Syrorum et Armenorum*, Tomus Secundus, Akademische Druck and Verlagsanstalt, Graz-Austria, 1961, p. 386; T. PAZHOOR, , *vivâham (Mal.) (Marriage)*, L. MOOLAVEETIL (ed.), *Koodasakal Malankara Sabhayil (Mal.) (Sacraments in the Malankara Church)*, p.163; cf. S. BROCK, *Môrân 'Eth'ô: A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, SEERI, Kottayam, India, 1997, pp. 57-59; A. Y. SAMUEL (ed.), *The Order of Solemnization of the Sacrament of Matrimony according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch* (translated from the original Syriac), Hakensack, New Jersey, 1974, in the introduction.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. W. De VRIES, "Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysites", *OCA* 125 (1940) 244-51; cf. also J. M. SAUGET, "Le mariage dans le Rite Syrien Occidental", *OS* 2 (1957) 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. H. DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium, coptorum, syrorum et armenorum, in administrandis sacramentis*, Tomus II, Typis et sumptibus Stahelianis, Würzburg, 1864, pp. 386-402. For more details on the matrimonial rites of the Oriental churches, especially on the Syrian Jacobite Church, compiled by Bar Hebraeus, Jacob of Edessa etc. cf. H. DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium*, Tomus 1, Typis et sumptibus Stahelianis, Würzburg, 1863, pp. 150-83. In the development of the West-Syrian liturgy, the role of Jacob of Edessa is very great. He has contributed extensively for the liturgical service of each sacrament. Like Jacob,



use of a ring, the use of the cross, crowning in the Church by the priest and the priestly blessing.<sup>51</sup>

Bar Hebraeus codified an authentic discipline for the marriage of the Syrians. The chapter eight of Bar Hebraeus' *Nomocanon* deals with the marriage ceremonies which include

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Bar Hebraeus, Severios of Antioch, Philexinos of Mabbug etc. also have contributed a lot for the West-Syrian liturgy. For example, the Order of baptism and confirmation (cf. Denzinger, *RO*, Tomus I, contribution by Jacob of Edessa, pp. 266-67; 279-301; Severios of Antioch, pp. 302-17; Jacob of Serugh, pp. 334-351), Eucharistic rite (Syrian Jacobite canons by Jacob of Edessa, *Nomocanon* of Bar Hebraeus, cf. Denzinger, *RO*, Tomus I, pp. 414-16), penitential rite (by Dionysius Bar Salibi, cf. Denzinger, *RO*, Tomus I, pp. 440-48; 493-500), rite of ordination (by Jacob of Edessa, cf. Denzinger, *RO*, Tomus II, pp. 65 ff; Bar Hebraeus' *Nomocanon* of ordination, pp. 71-78), matrimonial rite (the blessing of the rings and crowns compiled by Jacob of Edessa and *Nomocanon* of Bar Hebraeus, cf. Denzinger, *RO*, Tomus II, pp. 386-402), rite of extreme unction (Jacob of Edessa, cf. Denzinger, *RO*, Tomus II, pp. 506-17). The manuscripts for all these documents, especially on marriage, cf. the following: on marriage contract by Jacob of Edessa, Vat. Syr. 37 (an. 1635); Canons of Dionysius Bar Salibi, Vat. Syr. 37 (an. 1635); *Nomocanon* of Bar Hebraeus, Vat. Syr. 169; *Rituel Syrien d'Antioch*, Vat. Syr. 57; Ms. De Beyrut du Patriarcat Syrien. We find many important canons made by Bar Hebraeus, Dionysius Bar Salibi, Jacob of Edessa etc. regarding the marriage especially on the purpose of marriage, indissolubility, affinity, consent, procreation, marital bond, reasons for separation etc., cf. *Disciplina Antiochena Antica, Siri*, III (Textes concernant les sacrements), by P. HINDO, *Fonti*, Serie II, Fasc. 27, Sacra Congregazione per la chiesa orientale, Codificazione canonica orientale Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1941, pp. 237-79.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. W. S. KENNETH, *Nuptial Blessing: a Study of Christian Marriage rites*, London, SPCK, 1982, p. 113. The Syrian Orthodox ('Jacobite') Church history in the 13<sup>th</sup> century is dominated by a scholarly bishop who mostly known as 'Bar Hebraeus' (son of the Hebrew). His father was a Christian of Jewish origin and a famous physician. The son of this Hebrew was born between 1225-26. Bar Hebraeus has written extensively on different topics including theology and sacraments. His famous book 'Book of the Candalabra of the Sanctuary' which is called his 'Summa Theologica' includes the treatises on Incarnation, sacraments etc. He has written many other books like 'Store House of the Mysteries' (commentary of the Old and New Testaments), 'Book of Ethics or Ethicon'



the norms and directions for the engagement ceremony, proclamation, rite, form, impediments, consanguinity and affinity, age, place, confession and retreat, dowry, forbidden times, days of the marriage, conditions for the divorce and second marriage, marital ceremonies and so on.<sup>52</sup> The *Nomocanon* deals with some particular rituals and procedures of the marriage ceremony. It says that the engagement is made with a contract between both the parents or the guardians before a lit lamp in the Church or in the house of the bride. It

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(on ascetic-mystical tradition of the Christian orient), 'Book of the Dove' (on morality & on monks), 'Book of the Guidances' (Nomocanon), his last work 'Chronikon'. The Nomocanon (*ktobo-d-huddoye* = book of the directions or book of the norms) has been the basic legal code of the Syrian Orthodox Church. He summarized the entire Syrian heritage in this literary work and still it is the authority in the Syrian Orthodox Church in all areas of its life. The Nomocanon consists 40 chapters. But in these 40 chapters, the first 8 chapters deal with the canon law, the Church and its governance, on baptism, on chrism, on the Eucharist, on fasting, feasts and prayers, on the requiem of the dead, on priestly grades, and finally on marriage. cf. *Nomocanon Gregori Barhebraei*, ed. P. BEDJAN; *Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum Nomocanon a Gregorio Abdulpharagio Bar Hebraeo Syriace compositus*, trans. by A. MAI, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis condicibus*, vol. X, Typis Vaticanis, Roma, 1838, pp. 1-268; cf. W. HAGE, "Gregory Bar-Hebraya: The Syrian Orthodox Scholar and Maphrian of the East", W. HAGE, *Syriac Christianity in the East*, SEERI, Kottayam, India, 1988, p. 80; G. RICCIOTTI, "Siri", P. HINDO, *Disciplina Antiochena Antica* (Siri) II, Tipografia Polyglotta Vaticana, Roma, 1951, pp. 133-35.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. A. S. I. PLACIDUS, *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium: Commentarius Historico-Canonicus*, pp. 107-09; 180-83; *Disciplina Antiochena (Siri): Nomocanone de Bar-Hebreo*, Fonti, Fascicolo 3, Sacra Congregazione per le chiese Orientali, Codificazione Canonica Orientale, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1931, pp. 117-23. It particularly deals with the praestantia, tempus celebrationis, celebratio, secundae nuptiae etc.; cf. also *Disciplina Antiochena Antica, Siri*, III (Textes concernant les sacrements), by P. HINDO, pp. 89-123. In this text, *Disciplina Antiochena Antica*, we find the notion of marriage as a sacrament, its indissolubility, blessing of rings (notion and rites, consent etc.), blessing of the crowns (importance of the crowning, its descriptions and ceremonies, its symbolism, nuptial banquet, nuptial chamber etc.).



says the need of the announcement of the marriage which should be made thrice in the Church. The *Nomocanon* says that for the validity of the marriage, it has to be contracted in the presence of the priest. The priest blesses the rings and puts the one on the finger of the bridegroom and the other on the finger of the bride. The bridegroom puts a little cross on the neck of the bride. Moreover, the bridegroom puts a 'velum' on the head of the bride.<sup>53</sup> Bar Hebraeus gives a description about the betrothal ceremony and the blessing of the rings. In his *Ethics*, he speaks of the excellence and the good quality of marriage, and brings the basis of its sacramental nature. He cites the classical text of Eph 5:32, "This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church".<sup>54</sup> In this treatise, we find the important elements of the church-ceremony of marriage including the crowning ceremony. Ephrem also speaks of the crowning of the bridegroom and the bride. For him, the crowning of the spouses symbolizes the victory. He makes allusion to the nuptial banquet in one of his homilies.<sup>55</sup> Jacob of Serugh also makes allusion to the crowning.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. A. S. I. PLACIDUS, *De Fontibus Iuris Ecclesiastici Syro-Malankarensium: Commentarius Historico-Canonicus*, pp. 107-09.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. W. De VRIES, "Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysites", *OCA* 125 (1940) 245-46; cf. P. BEDJAN, *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei*, Harrassowitz, Lipsiae, Paris, 1898, pp. 140-41.



### 1.3.2. The Origin of the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage and its Influences

It may be noted that there are mainly three elements namely Jewish, Syrian and Indian that influenced the origin and structure of the Malankara liturgy of marriage. As we have already seen, the main elements such as the expression of consent, blessing of the ring, prayer for the bride and bridegroom, readings from the Scripture, blessing of the crown, the ceremony of crowning, the blessing of the bridal robes, the rite of *minnukettu* and *mantrakôti*<sup>57</sup>, the rite of *pânigrhana* etc. that we see in the present structure of the Malankara marriage liturgy are of these influences.

The influence of the Jewish background can be clearly noticed in the marriage liturgy. As the Jewish marriage ceremony had two stages (the betrothal ceremony and the marriage ceremony which took place at two different times) the Malankara marriage liturgy also has these two stages: betrothal or engagement (مَكْرُوتَ - *mkîrûtô*) which is the preparation for marriage and the proper marriage (زَوْجَ - *zuôgô*). These take place at two different times. The service of betrothal is a special ceremony which is held normally either a few months or weeks or even immediately before the

marriage. *Mkîrûtô* is not the same as *zuôgô* but it is part of *zuôgô*. Both of them together make it a sacrament. The first part of the Malankara liturgical text of the marriage is called *mkîrûtô* and the second part is *zuôgô*.<sup>58</sup> The Jewish betrothal was an agreement between the two parties and two families. This might have been influenced by the early Christians and later the Church may have adapted it as a ritual ceremony. Therefore, the important elements of the Jewish marriage rite such as the document of the contract of the union, ceremony of betrothal, crowning of bride and bridegroom, custom of *huppâh*, custom of giving rings, handing over of the bride and the celebration of the co-habitation are seen in the liturgical structure.

In the Malankara liturgy of marriage we find that many elements have been adopted from the Indian culture also. The rite of tying the *minnultâli* is a typical part of the Hindu marriage ceremony. The custom of *mantrakôti* is a combination of the Jewish (*huppâh* - bridal chamber) and Indian customs. In the marriage liturgy, *mantrakôti* is the nuptial garment with which the bridegroom covers the bride. In the early Church also, there was the custom of the nuptial veil. We find many patristic references to the 'robe of glory' in the Syriac writings

<sup>58</sup> Cf. MAR GREGORIOS I., "The Sacrament of Marriage in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch" *Pro Oriente*, pp.1-5.cf. also *Disciplina Antiochena Antica, Siri*, III (Textes concernant les sacrements), by P. HINDO, p. 108; A. RAES makes an explicit study on the marriage liturgy of the different Oriental Rites (Byzantine, Armenian, West Syrian, Maronites, Chaldean, Coptics and Ethiopian) with a beautiful chart showing the order and essential elements of each liturgy; cf. A. RAES, *Introductio in Liturgiam Orientalem*, PIOS, Romae, 1947, pp. 165, 155-57.



which could be seen as an indication of the introduction of this rite into the Church. The Hindu custom of *putavakoda* is an integral part of the marriage. Both these Jewish and Hindu customs are still preserved in the Malankara liturgy of marriage.<sup>59</sup> The Hindu custom of *pânigrahana* parallels to the Malankara rite of the joining of hands. Many Hindu customs such as the dress, ornaments, food and so on have also influenced the Christian marriage celebration. Through inculturation, some other social ceremonies connected with Indian tradition such as the body ornaments, traditional wedding songs, anointing with *kalabham* also have become the part of the marriage celebrations.

The Malankara liturgy of marriage<sup>60</sup> contains two services: The first service consists of the blessing of the rings and the second service consists of the blessing of the crowns. The first service is mainly included with the expression of the consent, antiphon (*eniyônô*), the hymn of commemoration (*kûkliôn*), a small prayer (*eqbô*), preface for a prayer called

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. C. AERATH, *Liturgy and Ethos - A Study based on The Malankara Liturgy of Marriage*, p.142.

<sup>60</sup> For convenience, hereafter I use MLM for the Text for the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage (*Koodâsakramom*), St. Mary's Press, Trivandrum, 2008; ET (English translation of MLM) made by P. YOUSIF and is inserted as appendix in C. AERATH'S book *Liturgy and Ethos*; and ST for the Syriac Text of Matrimony Têksô d'zoogô (ܟܘܕܝܫܐ ܟܘܕܝܫܐ),



*Sêdrô* (*prômiûn*), a long series of prayers (*sêdrô*), prayer of incense (*etrô*), blessing of the rings, prayer for the bride and bridegroom, canticle (*sûgîto*) and the prayer of the seal. The first service (blessing of the rings) begins with the public affirmation of the mutual consent in which the couple confirm they are ready to marry of their own volition. In this service the rings are blessed and given to both bridegroom and bride. The priest blesses the rings and puts on the right hand finger of the bridegroom and the bride with a prayer. In the West-Syrian liturgy of marriage, the pair do not exchange their rings. The priest gives the rings to both the bridegroom and the bride. Then the choir sings the hymns expressing the bridal relation between Christ and the Church.

The second part (blessings of the crowns) consists of the opening prayer, *eniyônô*, *kûkliôn*, *eqbô*, *prômiûn-sêdrô*, *qûqôyô*, *etrô*, readings from the epistle and Gospel, blessing of the crowns, joining of the hands, *bô'ûtô* and admonition.<sup>61</sup> The coronation (blessing of the crowns) is the important part of the wedding ceremony. Here, the priest prays for God's blessing on the bridegroom and the bride. After the proclamation of the epistle and Gospel, the priest performs the ceremony of coronation.<sup>62</sup> The sacrament of marriage is also referring to the crowns which symbolize that the couple belong to each other.<sup>63</sup> The blessing of the rings and crowns

<sup>61</sup> *kûkliôn*, *eqbô*, *prômiûn-sêdrô*, *qûqôyô*, *etrô* etc. are important elements of the Malankara liturgy which follows the Antiochene tradition.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. A. S. I. PLACIDUS, *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*, pp. 186-88; cf. also A. RAES, *Introductio in Liturgiam Orientalem*, pp. 163-65; J. M. SAUGET, "Le mariage dans le Rite Syrien Occidental", *OS* 2 (1957) 3-57. The manuscripts of the marriage service of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries are kept in British Museum (Add. 14.493, 14.499 and 14.500). The marriage Ritual of the West Syrian is completely conserved in Syriac in the Vatican library (MSS. Borg. Sir. 57).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. MAR GREGORIOS I., "The Sacrament of Marriage in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch" *Pro Oriente*, pp. 4-7.



speaks of the important role of the priest in the marriage ceremony. John of Mardin (+1165) says that the marriage without the blessing of the priest is not valid.<sup>64</sup>

*Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium* (chapter 20) presents a number of pertinent canons and requirements that prescribe the marriage ceremony of the Malankara Church. These canons are taken from the Synod of Diamper and from the *Nomocanon* of Bar Hebraeus. *De sacramento matrimonio* of the Synod of Diamper prescribes many valid requirements regarding marriage such as its indissolubility, impediments, need of the confession and the communion, the role of the priest, place, minimum age, forbidden seasons, condition for the divorce, need of two witnesses, mutual consent of the parties, publications of banns, marriage registers and so on.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Cf. W. de VRIES, *Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysiten*, PIOS, Roma, 1940, p. 245. Though both Latin and Oriental churches accept the marriage as effected by the consent of the parties (*matrimonium facit partium consensus*), Oriental law requires the blessing of the priest for the validity of marriage (*ipso interventu sacerdotis adstantis ac benedictis*). According to Latin tradition, the spouses as ministers of God's grace mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church (CCC, no. 1623). At the same time, in the traditions of the Eastern churches, for the validity of the sacrament, the blessing of the priest is necessary (CCEO, can. 828). cf. J. A. FONSECA, *Marriage in India in a Christian Perspective: a Historical, Social, Theological Investigation*, p. 193.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. A. S. I. PLACIDUS, *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro Malankarensium*, pp. 177-84; Cf. Synod of Diamper, Session VII, *De Sacramento Matrimonio*, Decree nos. 1-16. For more on the canons of the Synod of Diamper regarding marriage, cf. J. A. FONSECA, *Marriage in India in a Christian Perspective: a Historical, Social, Theological Investigation*, pp. 191-93; cf. MAR GREGORIOS I., "The Sacrament of Marriage in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch" *Pro Oriente*, pp.8-9. The canons and instructions from the *Hudoyo* prescribe many requirements regarding the marriage. Abraham Konattu has translated *Hudoyo Canon* into Malayalam (Pambakuda, Kerala, 1952); cf. also T. PAZHOOOR, vivâham (Mal.) (Marriage), L. MOOLAVEETIL (ed.), *Koodasakal Malankara Sabhayil (Mal.)* (Sacraments in the Malankara Church), pp.167-68.



The second part of the *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*, mainly deals with the important canons regarding the marriage dealt in the *Nomocanon* (chapter 8) of Bar Hebraeus which we have already mentioned above.

#### **1.4. MARRIAGE IN EARLY SYRIAC LITERARY SOURCES**

The doctrine of Christian marriage is in a way developed from the Jewish culture and Jewish marriage ceremonies. Later, the Fathers of the Church elaborated on it by means of the theological teaching. They linked the sacrament of marriage with the mystery of Christ and the Church. For them, Christian marriage symbolises the permanent relationship between Christ and the Church. These ideas are well-expressed in the early Syrian literary sources, and there we find many theological thoughts with regard to marriage. Here, we are dealing with some of the Syrian literary sources and patristic writings which express the theology of marriage.

##### **1.4.1. Odes of Solomon**

The central theme in the Odes is that the 'spiritual marriage' of the faithful with Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, with the expectation of the union with him in the heavenly bridal chamber. We see many nuptial metaphors such as bridegroom, bride, bridal chamber, betrothal, wedding feast in connection with baptism. Here, baptism is considered as betrothal of the faithful with Christ the bridegroom. This nuptial language is clear in the following words:



Like the arm of the bridegroom over the bride,  
 so is my yoke over those who know me.  
 And as the bridal feast is spread out by the bridal pair's home,  
 so is my love by those who believe in me.<sup>66</sup>

In Ode 38:9-12 also, we find the nuptial terms such as Bridegroom, bride, marriage, banquet, wedding feast and so on. "And they imitate the Beloved and His bride ... they invite many to the wedding feast".<sup>67</sup> In all these Odes, the 'spiritual marriage' of the faithful with Christ the Bridegroom is the central theme. The Odes express the vital need of the strong union of the faithful with Christ. The odist presents the Lord as the source of great love, and exhorts the people to live in this love. "And let our faces shine in His Light, and let our hearts meditate in His love, by night and by day".<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ode 42: 7-9; cf. J. H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Odes of Solomon* (Syriac and English), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, pp. 143-45. Here there may have a veiled allusion to the easy yoke of Christ (Mt 11:29) which the neophyte takes upon in the baptism. Metaphorically, the yoke which Christ lays upon His faithful ones, is like the embrace of the Bridegroom for His bride, the Church. cf. J. H. BERNARD (ed.) *The Odes of Solomon*, University Press, Cambridge, 1912, pp. 130-31. According to the scholars, Odes of Solomon is the oldest surviving Syriac Christian work whose original language was Syriac rather than Greek. Odes of Solomon is a group of 42 short lyric poems of great beauty. They are the 'mysterious poems', mainly praises of God, arising from the gratitude for the gift of salvation. Though the date and place of origin is uncertain, it is considered that it belongs to the mid or late second century; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* p. 25; A. G. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *From Symbol to Truth: A Syriac Understanding of the Paschal Mystery*, CLV - Edizioni Liturgiche, Roma, 2000, pp. 48-49.

<sup>67</sup> Ode 38:11; cf. J. H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Odes of Solomon*, p. 131.

<sup>68</sup> Ode 41:6; cf. J. H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Odes of Solomon*, p.139.



### 1.4.2. Tatian the Syrian

Tatian (130-185) says that once the marriage bond is established, the couple is bound to foster it. He defends the indissolubility of marriage and condemns the breaking of the marriage bond.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, he esteems the state of celibacy, and says that celibacy fosters union with God. He says, "the people of this world take a wife and make marriages; but they who shall be worthy of the life of the other world and of the resurrection of the blessed, will neither take wives nor make wedding feasts".<sup>70</sup> Though he never denied the legitimacy of marriage, he established his preference to rigorous asceticism. His views on the indissolubility of marriage and the asceticism express the inevitable relationship with Christ the Bridegroom. Commenting on Mt 9:15, Tatian refers to Christ as the real Bridegroom, and he urges the people to remain in the relationship with this great Bridegroom.<sup>71</sup>

### 1.4.3. Bardaisan of Edessa

Bardaisan (154-223) says that man has the liberty to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. For him, marital

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. TATIAN, "Oratio ad Graecos" 8:1, E. J. GOODSPEED (ed.) *Die ältesten Apologeten*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1914, pp. 266-305. Tatian was born in Assyria, in the present-day Iraq around 130 AD. After his conversion, he became a disciple of Justin the Martyr in Rome.

<sup>70</sup> TATIAN, *Liège Diatessaron*, D. PLOOIJ & C. A. PHILIPS (ET of the Dutch Text by A. J. BARNOUW), Koninklijke Akademie, Amsterdam, 1929-31, p. 173; cf. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome, 1994, p. 7. Later he joined to the Gnostic sect who denied marriage and sex. Because of his rigid view, the Western Fathers considered him a heretic. But the Syriac tradition does not include him among the heretics. He is considered the author of *Diatessaron* (the oldest version of the gospel in Syriac), composed around 169-172 AD. But, later, it fell under ecclesiastical censure.

<sup>71</sup> TATIAN, *Liège Diatessaron*, D. PLOOIJ & C. A. PHILIPS, pp. 124-25.



intercourse, prompted by the right freedom of will, is a way of fostering the interpersonal communion and love of husband and wife. He stresses the parents' duty to bring up their children properly.<sup>72</sup> Bardaisan stresses the right use of freedom in marital life. Though by the second century, there arose an enthusiasm for asceticism in the Syriac world, he is the only Syriac author who wrote positively about sexual intercourse in marital life. He considers that sex is also God's gift to men and he emphasises the idea that marriage is divinely instituted by God. For him, since marriage and the family derive from the order of God's creation, there is a special dignity and sacredness about them.

#### 1.4.4. Syriac Didascalia of the Holy Apostles

The author of the *Didascalia* presents instructions to married couples and expresses the sublimity of marriage based on the natural law. It highlights not only the divine origin but the divine precepts regarding marriage. It reminds the husbands of the divine commandment, 'you shall not commit adultery' (Mt 5:27). It recommends that one should not even desire another's wife and should not even look upon another's wife with an evil intention.<sup>73</sup> It proposes also certain canons on the

<sup>72</sup> Cf. BARDAISAN, *Liber legum Regionum*, PS II, 562-63; The name 'Bardaisan, means 'son of Daisan', derives from the river Daisan in Edessa, on the banks of which he is supposed to have been born in 154. His thoughts were introduced in the *Liber legum Regionum*, which was composed by his pupil Philippinus in Syriac. We find in PS II, 492-535 on his life, writings and doctrine; cf. For more on his life and doctrine, cf. *Liber legum Regionum*, PS II, 492-657.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Syriac Didascalia* 1:13, A. VÖÖBUS *Didascalia apostolorum in Syriac*, CSCO 402, 11, Syr. 176. *Didascalia of the Holy Apostles*, which is also known as the Catholic Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, originally written in Greek, but the complete text survives only in Syriac. It is an early manual of ecclesiastical life and administration, and introduces the ecclesiastical life, practices, discipline etc. Scholars are of the opinion that it is originated in the early part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The Syriac version of the eighth century has been edited by VÖÖBUS in *Didascalia*; cf. also CSCO 401-407/Scr.Syr. 176-180.



legitimate marriages and gives instructions to husbands and wives. The *Didascalia* emphasizes the indissolubility of the conjugal union.<sup>74</sup> Again, it stresses the leading role of parents in arranging the marriage of their children and the need of interior purity of the couples. The Syriac *Didascalia* symbolizes the glorification of the Church in her eschatological union with her Bridegroom, Christ. It uses the nuptial imagery of the 'Church crowned' as a paradigm for 'bride adorned'.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the Syriac *Didascalia* emphasises the biblical background of marriage's divine origin and the divine commandment with regard to its value and morality.

#### 1.4.5. Liber Graduum (Book of Steps)

The author of the *Liber Graduum* refers to the marriage of Adam and Eve in relation to the primordial state of perfection. He says that in the primordial state Adam was pure in heart and was created in a state of holiness like the angels.<sup>76</sup> But the fall of Adam and Eve completely changed the primordial state of perfection and holiness.<sup>77</sup> Thus, they lost

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Syriac Didascalia* 3:50-51, A. VÖÖBUS *Didascalia apostolorum in Syriac*, CSCO 402, 42-43. R. H. CONNOLLY, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (the Syriac version translated), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1929.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Syriac Didascalia* 7:99, A. VÖÖBUS *Didascalia apostolorum in Syriac*, CSCO 402, 102.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Liber Graduum*, Sermon XX:1 PS III, 528-529; XXX: 24 PS III, 920; XV:2 PS III, 340; XXV:1 PS III, 736. Sermon XV mentions signs of carnal concupiscence and sermon XX mainly speaks of the different grades of perfection. *Liber Graduum* or Book of Steps is a work dealing with spiritual direction, consisting in 30 chapters. The author, who almost certainly lived in the Persian empire (because there is a reference to the river Zab, a tributary of the river Tigris) is unknown; cf. S. BROCK, *Môrân 'Eth'ô-9: A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, SEERI, Kottayam, India, 1997, pp. 7-87; ORTIZ DE URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), PIOS, Roma, 1965, p. 91.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Liber Graduum* XV:1 PS III, 336.



paradise. *Liber Graduum* also speaks of monogamous marriage and mutual love between spouses.<sup>78</sup> It upholds the divine origin and nature of marriage.

#### 1.4.6. The Acts of Judas Thomas

In the Acts of Judas Thomas (AJT), the ancient apocryphal Acts which written originally in Syriac in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> C., there are some references regarding marriage and sexual union. But, the earthly marriage is here depicted as a contrast with the heavenly marriage and sexual union which is corruptible and blinds the intellect, is considered as an obstacle for the spiritual growth.<sup>79</sup> Sexual desire is conceived as foolishness and impurity. There are many instructions for practicing the life of virginity. Virginity is considered a foretaste of the eschatological life. The true union

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Liber Graduum* XIII:13 PS III, 310-11.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. AJT 1:12, 1:14, 2:28, 6:52; ORTIZ DE URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca*, pp. 37-41; J. QUASTEN, *Patrology*, vol. 1, Westminster & Maryland, 1986, pp. 139-140; cf. A. F. J. KLIJN (ed.) *The Acts of Thomas*, p. 42. The Apocryphal Acts of Judas Thomas mentions about a wedding where the Apostle Thomas happened to enter there, and a blessing and prayer from him. In this long prayer, there is a thanksgiving for the goodness of God in creation and preservation, which ends with a prayer for the couple; cf. M. SEARLE & W. S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, p. 4. The Acts of Judas Thomas (AJT) is an apocryphal writing which includes the account of the Apostle Thomas' missionary work and apostolate in India, it is considered that it is written at the beginning of the third century and originally composed in Syriac. This work is designed for a kerygmatic purpose. It presents an ecclesiological vision in the 'Song of the Bride' in chapters 6-7. This hymn is dedicated to the Church and filled with an allegory of the Church and includes with a description of the Church such as the 'Church is the daughter of the Light', church is 'adorned' and with 'splendour' etc. which denotes the supernatural element of the Church. The Church is described as the 'Bride of the Messiah, the Bridegroom', she is paradise on earth, the meeting point of heaven and earth etc.; cf. A. G. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *From Symbol to Truth: A Syriac Understanding of the Paschal Mystery*, pp. 59-65.



is only with Christ. Only those who lead a life of virginity and those who abstain from marital union can enter in the eschatological bridal chamber.<sup>80</sup> In short, the Acts of Judas Thomas give much emphasis to the aspect of virginity rather than the state of marriage. At the same time, AJT expresses a particular devotion to Christ the Bridegroom.<sup>81</sup> In AJT, we find a beautiful allegory of the Church, and the Church is praised for her beauty, splendour, garments and so on.<sup>82</sup>

#### 1.4.7. The Gospel of Thomas

The main idea of the Gospel of Thomas (GT), an apocryphal writing, is that the kingdom of God will be realized in the annulment of the sexes. It considers human sex as the cause of sin. Therefore, a true disciple of Christ is one who has achieved the abolition of sexuality.<sup>83</sup> It stresses the attainment of perfection through complete sexual abolition. Commenting on the Parable of the Virgins in the Gospel, it says that only the celibates will be allowed to enter the bridal chamber, which is the symbol of heaven.<sup>84</sup> In GT 37, we find the connection between 'becoming a child' and returning to

<sup>80</sup> Cf. AJT 9:88, 9:101, 9:98, 9:96, 12:144, 1:12; cf. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, pp. 22-23; cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, pp. 83-88.

<sup>81</sup> AJT 1, 11-16; A. F. J. KLIJN, (ed.) *Acts of Thomas*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1962, pp. 70-73; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.133.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. W. WRIGHT, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (The Syiac Text)*, Williams & Norgate, London, 1871, pp. 176-77; tr. pp. 150-52. Here, we find a long description on her tongue, neck, hands, finger etc.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 22; cf. H. C. KEE, "Becoming a Child" in the Gospel of Thomas", *JBL* 82 (1963) 307-14.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 22; cf. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 30.



the primordial state of purity and innocence. Thus, it says that salvation consists in regaining this primordial state of Adam before the fall and this status is attained through sexual abstinence. In this sense, the Gospel of Thomas considers abstinence from marriage and sex are more appreciable in attaining perfection.

### **1.5. THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE IN THE SYRIAC FATHERS**

The Syriac Fathers especially Ephrem, Aphrahat and Narsai have given a proper orientation to the theology, liturgy and spirituality of the Syriac churches. They made use of hymns and poetry as a vehicle for theology. The teachings of the Syriac Fathers on marriage through the nuptial imageries contributed much to the matrimonial theology of the Syriac churches. Their symbolic expression and the nuptial imageries regarding Christ as the Bridegroom and Church as His Bride are very rich in this area. For the Syriac Fathers, both marriage and consecrated virginity have special theological significance in the Church. Though virginity is considered as a special participation in the relationship with Christ, Syriac Fathers also symbolize Christian marriage as the image of Christ and the Church. They are of the opinion that Christian marriage draws the spouses more deeply into the mystery of Christ, and it demands a life of union as that of Christ and the Church.

#### **1.5.1. Aphrahat**

The date of Aphrahat's life is probably between about 270 and 345. Aphrahat, the Persian Sage and one of the 'Sons of the Covenant' (*Bar Qyâmâ*) is well-known for his famous



23 treatises, called *Demonstrations*. These are one of the earliest surviving literary works of the Syriac Church. *Demonstrations* 1-10 which form the first group mainly deal with the basic aspects of Christian life, while the second group, 11-22, in part consists of polemics against the Jewish practices, while the *Demonstration* 23 concentrates on certain current issues faced by the Church. He himself says that he wrote them in Syriac.<sup>85</sup> His main writings are based on biblical themes and the main doctrinal subjects are Trinity, Christology, sacraments, anthropology, asceticism and so forth.<sup>86</sup> He writes in prose and easily slips into rhythmic patterns, often with thematic parallelism.

Aphrahat, despite of his obvious preference for the state of consecrated virginity, clearly regards marriage as a lawful state. For him, marriage is good and holy because it is instituted by God the Creator Himself. He considers it as a state of life which signifies the fulfilment of God's purpose in creation by the spiritual and sexual union of a man and his wife.<sup>87</sup> Again he says, "Far be it from us that we should attribute anything shameful to marriage, which God has placed in this world, for thus it is written, God saw all that He made good, and it was very good".<sup>88</sup> For him, marriage and virginity are complementary and they do not contradict each other, but they complete each other. It is marriage which completes virginity

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. APHRAHAT, *Dem.* XXII:25; PS I, 1039-43.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. ORTIZ DE URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca*, pp. 49-51.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Dem.*, XVIII : 8 ; PS I, 836-37; *Dem.*, XVIII 12 ; PS I, 841. *Dem.*, VI: 4; PS I, 260. For more details on his works, cf. K. VALAVANOLICKAL, *Aphrahat Demonstrations*, Hirs Publications, Changanacherry, India, pp. 10-15

<sup>88</sup> *Dem.* XVIII: 8; PS I, 836. cf. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, pp. 39-40.



and keeps its purity. The examples of marriage and virginity in Aphrahat are taken from the Old Testament which considers virginity as the only way in which to be married. Marriage was brought into being by God, and virginity is the perfect way which leads to the divine marriage.<sup>89</sup> For Aphrahat, marriage is God's decision in man's life, and virginity is the divine and natural way to follow in order to be married according to God's will. He says:

Therefore, my brethren, if any man who is a single one (*Ihîdâyâ*) or holy (*Qadîshâ*) who loves the life of singleness (*Ihîdâyûthâ*), yet desires that a woman, a daughter of the covenant like himself, should dwell with him, it would be better for him in that case to take (to wife) a woman openly and not be made wanton by lust. So also again the woman, if she be not separated from the single one (*Ihîdâyâ*), it is better for her to marry openly .... It is just and right and becoming, that even if a man should be distressed, he should continue alone.<sup>90</sup>

He is of the opinion that marriage is good, but virginity is superior. "He (God) created intercourse for worldly procreation, and it is very good, but virginity is more excellent than it".<sup>91</sup> There are good things and better things also. Aphrahat says that marriage is good, but the renunciation is better.<sup>92</sup> In order to show his preference for celibacy, Aphrahat says that, for an unmarried man, God is his Father and the Holy Spirit his mother. An unmarried man loves his 'parents' with an undivided heart and married man loves his wife in order to please her. Marriage gives spouses many worldly

<sup>89</sup> Cf. S. ABOUZAYD, "Virginity in Aphrahat", *OCA* 236 (1990) 125.

<sup>90</sup> *Dem.* VI:2-6; *PS* 1, 256:22-262:14; cf. S. ABOUZAYD, "Virginity in Aphrahat", *OCA* 236 (1990) 129.

<sup>91</sup> *Dem.* XVIII:8; *PS* 1, 837:1-11; trans. J. NEUSNER, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1971, p. 81; cf. S. ABOUZAYD, "Virginity in Aphrahat", *OCA* 236 (1990) 129.

<sup>92</sup> *Dem.* XVIII:8, *PS* 1, 836-837.



cares, which block their perfect dedication to the service of the Lord. The virgins are those who betrothed themselves to Christ.<sup>93</sup> But he never demands that every Christian must be celibate and does not argue that it is obligatory. For him, the state of virginity, is the state of Adam and Eve before the fall.

### 1.5.2. Ephrem of Nisibis

Ephrem was born in Nisibis, probably about 306, of Christian parents and grew up under the saintly bishop of Jacob of Nisibis. Tradition says that Ephrem was a deacon. He wrote his hymns and sang them to the harp, taught them to the 'Daughters of the Covenant'. He wrote his works in Syriac which was called 'the Harp of the Spirit'. He was a great theologian, a religious poet and an exegete. He introduced the medium of poetry as the principle vehicle of his theology. Therefore, his writings still retain a great freshness and immediacy for the modern reader. In 1920, Pope Benedict XV declared Ephrem, Doctor of the Church.

Ephrem says that the sanctity of marriage derives from Eucharist and it is in the Eucharist that the symbolism of the union of the Church and Christ is clearly manifested.<sup>94</sup> Ephrem attacks Marcion for condemning marriage. Against the Marcionite teaching, Ephrem affirms that marriage is holy, pure, honourable. He says that through His birth Christ

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Dem.*, VI:7; *PS* 1, 272.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *HVirg.* 37; *CSCO* 223-24/*Scr.Syr* 94-95, pp. 133-35; 115-18. Robert Murray in an article on Ephrem, describes him as 'the greatest poet of the patristic age and, perhaps, the only theologian-poet to rank beside Dante' cf. J. H. CREHAN (ed.), *Catholic Dictionary of Theology*, London, 1967, pp. 220-23. Most of the authentic works of St. Ephrem have become available in reliable editions only since about 1950, especially to the work of Dom Edmund Beck, Dom Louis Leloir, Robert Murray, Sebastian Brock etc. who have contributed much to the



sanctified marriage. He relates the holiness in marriage to Jesus in the womb of Mary.<sup>95</sup> Here, Ephrem praises marriage as being 'of nature' and calls it 'love'. At the same time, he says that the 'crown' of marriage is *qûdsâ* (sexual continence), and stresses the right use of free will. He praises marriage on condition of sexual abstinence being practised. In the hymns preserved in Armenian, he refers to continence practised in marriage.<sup>96</sup> For him, like virginity and chastity, marriage also is a holy and lawful state of life leading the individual to God.

Ephrem comments also that marriage is sanctified by Christ and it is according to the divine law.<sup>97</sup> Ephrem is of opinion that Christ sanctified marriage through the miracle at

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theological interpretation of St. Ephrem. His main works can be classified as exegetical (*Comm. in Gen. & in Exodum, Comm. in Diatessaron, Comm. in Paulum, Comm. in Actus Apostolorum* etc.), dogmatic and polemical (*Contra haereses ad Hypatium, Hymni 56 contra haereses, hymni 87 de Fide, 6 sermones de Fide, 4 hymni adversus Iulianum, sermo de Domino Nostro, hymni de Paradiso* etc.), ascetical works (*hymni de Virginitate, hymni de Ecclesia* etc.) and Liturgical & other works (*hymni de Nativitate., hymni de ieiunio, Paschahymni HResur., HAzym., HCrucif., Carmina Nisibena, etc.*); cf. ORTIZ DE URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca*, pp. 56-72. His poetic charism is extended to a great part of his biblical commentaries. It constitutes an approach more Judeo-Christian and more Oriental; cf. B. de MARGERIE, *Introduzione alla storia dell'esegesi*, vol. I, Edizioni Borla, Roma, 1983, p. 153.

<sup>95</sup> EPHREM, *HcHaer.* 45: 6-10; CSCO 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, pp. 179-80; *Commentary of Diatessaron* 2:11; cf. L. LELOIR, "L'actualité du message d'Ephrem", *ParOr* 4:1-2 (1973) 69.



Cana.<sup>98</sup> Again he says that Christ the Bridegroom invites the people 'to the new wedding feast and to life in Eden'.<sup>99</sup> Ephrem praises marriage as good, but considers virginity as a pearl. Here, Ephrem considers the level of the virginity as superior<sup>100</sup> and virginal life is the most perfect one.<sup>101</sup> For him, there are three permissible states of life to be freely chosen: family life, continence, and virginity. He says that a virgin woman can carry Christ as Mary carried her Son in virginity.<sup>102</sup> However, he has no hostile attitude towards marriage. He does not say that the married people cannot attain holiness through their life. Ephrem speaks of the unity and indissolubility of marriage also and declares that Christ stabilized a new order comparing it to the Old Testament, by which divorce was abolished. Commenting on the epistle of Romans 7:2, he says that by the power of the law, the wife is linked to her husband as long as the husband lives and if her husband is dead, she is freed from the law to be united with whomever she wishes.<sup>103</sup>

### 1.5.3. Narsai

Narsai (399-502), the great Doctor and the liturgical commentator, was the director of the School of Edessa and

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *HcHaer.* 47:4; CSCO 169-70/Scr. Syr. 76-77, pp. 184; 163-64.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *HVirg.* 16:2; CSCO 223/Scr.Syr. 94, pp. 55; 53.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *HArm.* 3: 31-35; 9:61-65; PO 30, Fasc. 1, pp. 72-75. Here, Ephrem praises the both aspects – virginity and sanctity in marriage. A dialogue between matrimony and virginity is arranged here. Though he considers virginity as superior, he speaks of marriage in a positive way. His views on virginity, marriage, sanctity etc. is mentioned in *HArm.* 3:1-35; *HArm.* 4:1-111; cf. PO 30, Fasc. pp. 37-49.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *HcHaer.* 45:10; CSCO 169-170/Scr. Syr. 76-77, pp. 180;160.

<sup>102</sup> *HVirg.* 1:2; CSCO 223/Scr.Syr. 94, p. 1;1-2.

<sup>103</sup> S. EPHRAEM SYRI *Commentarii in Epistulus D. Pauli nunc primo ex armenio sermone in Latinum a P. P. MEKITARISTIS translatis, Venetiis, 1893, p. 18.*



Nisibis. In his *homily on Epiphany*, Narsai expresses the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church in a nuptial language:

He (John the Baptist) compared him (Jesus) to a bridegroom because of his love for men; and he called the bride, the members of his race who adhered to him. (This one) fulfilled (the role) of the bridegroom at the marriage feast of faith and took to himself the Church of the Gentiles (as) his betrothed of holiness. Instead of purple, he covered her with the garment of baptism and placed on her (head) a crown wholly plaited with the seals of the spirit.<sup>104</sup>

In his commentary on the parable of the ten virgins, Narsai uses nuptial language to explain the relation between the virgins and Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom. Since the wise virgins were vigilant, they were received by the Bridegroom. In other words, the virgins who had been betrothed to Christ in body and spirit were accepted. For Narsai, marriage is constituted of two moments: the betrothal and the wedding proper. He views the marriage as a sacrament of the Church. Therefore, the mutual consent of the spouses is the most important aspect in marriage. Narsai stresses the key role of the priest in the marriage ceremony saying that without a priest a marriage will not be accomplished.<sup>105</sup> Here, he mentions that the priest is the witness and the representative of Christ and the Church.

<sup>104</sup> F. MACLEOD (ed. & trans.), *Metrical Homilies of Narsai on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension* 95, PO 40.1, Brepols, 1979; cf. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 60.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. A. MINGANA (ed.) *Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et Carmina*, Hom. 17, Mosul, Iraq, 1905, p. 289; R. H. CONNOLLY (trans), *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, University Press, Cambridge, 1909, p.21



## Conclusion

We have seen that the present Christian marriage ceremony has undergone a long process of evolution and development. Many factors have contributed towards this process. In this chapter we were mainly concerned with the historical antecedents of the present Christian marriage ceremony. The first part deals with the Christian marriage ceremony and its Jewish antecedents. Since Christianity has its roots in the Jewish religion, it is noteworthy to find out the Jewish background and character of the liturgy which remarkably influenced the early forms of Christian worship especially its liturgy of marriage. In this section we have attempted to make a study of the Jewish tribal marriage ceremony and the Jewish proper marriage rite. Here, we have discovered some important Jewish influences on the Christian marriage ceremony such as the ceremony of betrothal, crowning of bride and bridegroom, document of the contract of the union, custom of *huppâh* and so on.

The second part deals with the Genesis and formation of the Christian marriage in general. In this section, we make a study of Christian marriage ceremonies in the first three centuries, marriage ceremony from the fourth century to the present period, and the origin of the marriage ceremony of the Thomas Christians. Since there was no specific Christian liturgy of marriage, the early Christians were following the local customs and traditions of the non-Christians with a Christian interpretation. There was no presence of the priest and the father of the family presided over the marriage ceremony. However, from the fourth century, we find a



sequence of betrothal and marriage, a formal liturgy for the marriage celebration, the intervention of the consecrated ministers, the solemn nuptial blessing and so on. In the origin of the marriage ceremony of the Thomas Christians also we find many influences such as Jewish, Syrian and Indian. The marriage ceremony of the Thomas Christians adapted many local traditions and customs.

The third part discusses the origin and development of the Malankara liturgy of marriage. In this part, the main aspects discussed are the origin of the West Syrian liturgy of marriage and the origin of the Malankara liturgy of marriage and its different influences. The studies reveal that the Malankara liturgy also has been influenced by some important elements such as Jewish, Syrian and Indian. The main elements such as the expression of the consent, blessing of the ring and crown, prayer for the bride and bridegroom, readings from the Scripture, ceremony of crowning, blessing of the bridal robes, rite of tying the *minnu*, the bridal veil, the rite of joining the hands are of these influences. But it celebrates the marriage ceremony emphasising its own tradition. The fourth part briefly dealt with the early Syriac writings on marriage, especially in the Syrian literary sources, the Apocryphal writings. The fifth part examines the concept of marriage in the Syriac Fathers such as Aphrahat, Ephrem and Narsai. Though Christian marriage is developed from the Jewish marriage custom and traditions, it is the Fathers who shaped and transformed it into a theological doctrine. The Fathers symbolized Christian marriage as an image of the indissoluble union between Christ and the Church.

We have already seen that marriage is a gift of creation, and God is the author of this interpersonal communion between man and woman in marriage. It is this reciprocal love and mutual support which unites them as 'one flesh' (Gen. 2:24). In making this 'one flesh' union, Church-marriage plays an important role. Marriage is a 'sacrament' of the mystery of the living communion with Christ and His Church. This symbolism and mystery of the spousal union between Christ and the Church, the images of 'Christ as Bridegroom' and the 'Church as Bride' and the ecclesiology of the matrimony will be elaborately treated in the following chapters as these images are clearly reflected in the Malankara liturgy of marriage.



## CHAPTER TWO

# THEOLOGY OF THE SPOUSAL UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

### Introduction

The analytical study of the liturgical prayers of the marriage service expresses a genuine faith and theology of the Church. It expresses an interlocking relation between Christ and the Church, and the Church and liturgy. The early Church expressed its faith through its liturgical celebrations. It is in the Church that theology is formulated and liturgy is celebrated and thus, both theology and liturgy meet together in the Church. In this sense, liturgy is the celebration of our faith and theology is the explanation of our faith. The worship of the Church and her theology are mutually related. The faith of the Church is preserved and protected in the liturgy. According to Oriental theology, liturgy is the faith-expression of the Church. Thus, liturgy becomes the 'source' of her faith, theology and life. In this sense, the ancient theological principle *Lex Orandi Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi* (law of prayer as the law of belief and the law of prayer and belief is the law of life) is very relevant

here. Here, the law of prayer stands for liturgy and the law of belief stands for the faith and theology of the Church and the law of life stands for spirituality.<sup>1</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also expresses the same idea: “When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles – whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi* (or: *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, according to Prosper of Aquitaine). The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living tradition”.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the liturgy is the expression and means to strengthen the faithful in matters of faith and reveals its importance to enlighten the process of establishing certain dogmatic facts.<sup>3</sup> The Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, emphasizes the importance of the liturgy in the life of the Church (SC 1:1, 5-13). Each liturgical tradition

<sup>1</sup> Cf. C. VAGAGGINI, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of Liturgy*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1976, pp. 529-41; R. SOPHY, *Church as Mystery (Raza) and Communion (Shawtaputha) in the East Syriac Liturgical Year: an Ecclesiological Analysis*, OIRS, Kottayam, India, 1998, pp. 382-89. cf. G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2 ed. No. 1124, Revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1997, p. 291. The axiom *legem credendi ex statuat supplicandi* derives from the so-called capitula Coelestini which were annexed to a letter of Pope Celestine I (422-32), but which are now held to be the work of the lay monk, Prosper of Aquitaine (ca. 435); PL 51, 205-12; G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, p. 224.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. C. VAGAGGINI, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of Liturgy*, p. 531.



was set by the Fathers of the Church and it expresses genuine theology. Therefore, we need an accurate knowledge of its liturgical theology. For this we have to understand the liturgical and theological context of the Fathers and the early Christian writers who wrote out of their God-experience and ecclesial experience. Such writings are the best source of theology and they express the theological mind of the Church.

We make an attempt in this chapter to find out the theology of the sacrament of matrimony with regard to the Christ-Church relation expressed in the matrimonial relationship as a source of its redemptive love. This redemptive spousal love is the spirit and life of the Church and also of the couple and family. It is in this 'marriage of Christ and His Church' that matrimony becomes a sacrament. Therefore, the ecclesiology and the sacramentality of marriage are interrelated. The Malankara liturgy of marriage presents Christian marriage as a symbol of the spousal union between Christ and the Church. It remains the central and fundamental theme of the marriage liturgy. The prayers of the marriage liturgy express this idea. This chapter makes an attempt to elaborate the theological dimension in which the spousal union of Christ and His Church is reflected in the matrimonial service. Here, we are particularly dealing with the importance of symbolism in theology and liturgy, conjugal symbolism expressed in the Sacred Scripture, theology of the spousal union of Christ and the Church, spousal union as 'one flesh', 'great mystery', indissoluble and sacrament. In this way, the theology of the spousal union and marriage is briefly discussed in the present chapter.

## 2.1. IMPORTANCE OF SYMBOLISM IN THEOLOGY AND LITURGY

The concept of symbolism is very important in Catholic theology today. After the Second Vatican Council, many different concepts and descriptions of the Church have emerged. They have given rise to various understandings of the Church's essence, identity and mission. Avery Dulles in his study *Models of the Church* calls them models. In this way, ecclesiology has developed a larger doctrinal pattern through wider thinking and reflection on the Church through symbols and images. Images, symbols and models are immensely important for the life of the Church especially for its preaching and liturgy. Theology itself depends heavily on images. Theologians use images for a better understanding of the mysteries of faith. For example, the image of the 'flock of Christ' creates in our mind a thought that certain things follow and certain things do not.<sup>4</sup> Rahner makes a relationship between Christ as the 'Ursakrament' and the Church as the 'Grundsakrament'. He makes an exegetic analysis of John 19:34 in the patristic background. In the life of Christ, Rahner finds a 'soteriological' symbolism. For example, the origin of the Church from the wounded side of Christ is a suitable symbol of Christ's close union with the Church and her dependence on Christ.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. DULLES, *Models of the Church* (expanded edition), Image Books, Doubleday, New York, 1987 p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, *Aussage und Zusage: Zur Indirektheit der Methode Karl Rahners veranschaulicht an seiner Christologie*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma, 1985, pp. 272-73.



Religious symbols are strong enough to deepen and illuminate the mind to discover divine truths and to receive a divine vision. The symbols stand for a very rich and a strong religious experience expressing a personal relationship with God. In the religious sphere, images function as symbols. "These images communicate through their evocative power. They transform the horizons of man's life, integrate his perception of reality, alter his scale of values, reorient his loyalties, attachments and aspirations in a manner far exceeding the powers of abstract conceptual thought".<sup>6</sup> The images help us to realize that the infinite can never be captured in the finite structures of language and, therefore, they go beyond any purely conceptual definition or symbolic representation. Due to the effective power and primordial importance of images and symbols, they have become apt vehicles for theological and religious meanings. Religious symbols awaken in the people, an encounter with an ultimate Other at the limits of human existence.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.1.1. Symbols and Symbolic Language in the Bible**

The prophets and other biblical writers in general describe divine things in figurative language. Some of the images are taken from the cosmic realities such as fire, water, rock and some others are borrowed from the social life of Israel for example, God as the Father, King, Judge, Shepherd, Vine-

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<sup>6</sup> A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. S. HAPPEL, "Theological Dimensions of Symbol", *The New Dictionary of Theology*, J. A. KOMONCHAK et. al. (eds.), Michael Glazier, Wilmington, USA, 1989, pp. 998-1002.

dresser and Spouse.<sup>8</sup> We see that God manifests His power and mercy through symbolic deeds. Both in the Old and the New Testament, salvation history is made through God's many symbolic gestures like miracles, crossing the Red Sea, the manna in the desert and the entry into the promised land. Calamities such as the collapse of the Davidic monarchy, the destruction of the Temple, and the Babylonian exile reveal such interventions on the part of God.

In the New Testament the incarnate Word is the absolute and unsurpassable earthly embodiment of God. In Christ and in the Church, all the Old Testament symbolisms are recapitulated and fulfilled. Christ's miraculous deeds, ritual actions such as the Last Supper, sacrifice on Calvary, Resurrection and Ascension reveal His mission and person. Christ preached to the people through parables. In John's Gospel, Christ is presented as the Good Shepherd, the true Vine, the Manna, the Living Water and the Light of the world. There are many other biblical images symbolizing the Church such as the Salt of the earth, Fish and Fishnet, Boat, Ark, Fig Tree, Building of God, Building on the Rock, Sheepfold, Cultivated Field, Mother, Ship of Salvation, Vineyard, the Way, Paradise, Bride of Light, Daughter of Light and so on.

### **2.1.2. Symbolic Language in the Syriac Tradition**

The use of symbolic language as a mode of theological reflection is an important characteristic of Syriac theology.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. DULLES, "Symbol in Revelation", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, McGRAW-HILL Book Company, The Catholic University of America, New York, 1967, p. 862. Under the impact of salvation history, the images themselves took on a history. In the New Testament, Christ Himself described His status in terms of the Old Testament figures and preached to the people in the images and parables.



The symbolic theology of the Syriac Fathers and other writers became highly influential in theological circles.<sup>9</sup> It is really the unique and the particular nature of the Syriac tradition to reveal the content of faith and theology through signs, symbols and imageries. "Wherever you turn your eyes, there is God's symbol; whatever you read, there you will find His types".<sup>10</sup> These are deeply connected with the Semitic origin and the biblical tradition. For example, Aphrahat's 'clothing imagery' has its roots in the Bible and the Targum tradition in Judaism (Gen 3:21; Ps 132:16; Dan 10:5). Aphrahat associates the guest without a wedding garment (Mt 22:11-14) with baptism. The wedding garment is the robe of glory, which is Christ Himself (Rom 13:14) which every Christian puts on in baptism. It is a necessary condition for entering into the marriage feast and the bridal chamber.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The whole Syriac literature covers from the second to the twentieth century AD, and this long span of time can conveniently be divided into six periods: (a) 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries: the earliest literature such as Peshitta Old Testament, The Diatessaron. The Old Syriac Gospels, Bardaisan, Odes of Solomon, The Acts of Thomas etc. (b) Aphrahat, Ephrem and other 4<sup>th</sup> century writings such as Books of Steps (*Liber Graduum*), (c) 5<sup>th</sup> to mid 7<sup>th</sup> century writers such as Cyrillona, Balai, John the Solitary, Jacob of Serugh, Simeon the Potter (*Qûqôyô*), Philoxenos of Mabbug, Isaac of Antioch, Cyrus of Edessa, John of Ephesus, Babai the Great etc. (d) mid 7<sup>th</sup> till end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century writers such as Isho'Yahb III, Isaac of Nineveh, Jacob of Edessa, Moses Bar Kepha, Dionysius Bar Salibi, Bar Hebraeus etc. (e) 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century and, (f) 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among these six periods, b-d (4<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) provides the most extensive and important Syriac literature; For more details, cf. S. BROCK, *Môrân 'Ethô - 9: A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, pp. 7-87.

<sup>10</sup> EPHREM, *HVirg.*, 20:12; CSCO 223-24/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 170, 64.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. APHRAHAT, *Dem.* VI: 1,6; *PS*, Pars Prima, p. 239.



For the Syriac writers, a symbol is something that signifies and makes present what it signifies. In this sense, a symbol not only points to something, but also it represents, in that it takes the place of something. Through this symbolic vision and typological expressions, the inner meaning is clearly expressed. The symbolic language in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* and Ephrem's *Hymns*, consist of typology, metaphors and allegories to convey the richness of the reality hidden in the theology. Aphrahat and Ephrem, in their treatment of the biblical typology, stand very close. The fundamental principles of their theological language are expressed in their biblical typology. For them, the Bible, as a work of God, is made in human imagery and language; and Bible's language and method is of symbol rather than of mere factual statement. Ephrem says: "Wherever you look, his symbol is there: wherever you read, you find his types, for in him all creatures were created and he marked all his possessions with his symbols when he created the world".<sup>12</sup> The Syriac Fathers, especially Ephrem and Aphrahat were very interested to apply a series of images to Christ.

Ephrem in his hymns has used a litany of symbolic titles, especially in his *Hymns on Virginity*. Christ is titled as 'Treasurer', 'great High Priest', 'Spring' 'Teacher', our 'Confidence', 'Rock', 'Door' or 'Gate', the 'Sun', 'Vine', 'Tree of Life', 'Grape', 'Bread of Life', 'Way', 'Mariner', and

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<sup>12</sup> EPHREM, *HVirg* 20,12, CSCO 223/Scr.Syr. 94, p. 70; cf. R. MURRAY, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology", *Parole de l'Orient*, vols. 6-7 (1975-76) 5.



'Shepherd'.<sup>13</sup> Ephrem frequently uses the image Christ as the 'Medicine of Life' in his hymns. "Ruth had recognized the hidden presence of the Medicine of Life in Jesus' ancestor Boaz".<sup>14</sup> "Let Eve today rejoice in Sheol, for her daughter's Son has come down as the Medicine of Life to receive His mother's mother".<sup>15</sup> Again he expresses Christ's presence in the Eucharistic Bread and Wine also as the 'Medicine of Life'. "The Grape of Mercy was pressed and gave the Medicine of Life to the peoples".<sup>16</sup> He uses the figure of 'putting on cloth' many times in his hymns indicating the Incarnation. He says that God humbly clothes himself in our symbols and languages. Ephrem's *hymn on the Unleavened Bread* and the *hymn on the Paschal Lamb* are very typical in which he sees the types of the Exodus which are fulfilled in Christ, His sacrifice and the Church's Eucharist. He says, "The type was in Egypt, the reality in the Church: the sealing of the reward (will be) in the Kingdom". Here, the symbolic force of the typology is progressive and it naturally suggests a journey in which Ephrem sees history as a road on which mankind has

<sup>13</sup> Cf. R. MURRAY, "A Hymn of St. Ephrem to Christ", *Sobornost*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1979) 39-50. The collection 'On Faith' illustrates Ephrem's characteristic approach to Christology. For further Syriac tradition of theology through 'names' or symbolic titles cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, chs. V-VI and R. MURRAY, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology", *Parole de l'Orient*, vols. 6-7 (1975-6) 1-20. Ephrem's all authentic Syriac works, especially his hymns, have translated and interpreted by Dom Edmund Beck into German language which we find in the different volumes of CSCO. The contributions of P. Graffin, G. Saber, S. Brock, and R. Murray are also very notable in this area.

<sup>14</sup> *HNat.* 1:13; CSCO 186-87/Scr.Syr. 82-83, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *HNat.* 13:2; CSCO 186-87/Scr.Syr. 82-83, pp. 73-74, 66.

<sup>16</sup> *HVirg.* 31:3; CSCO 223-24/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 113, 98; cf. also *Carm.Nis.* 46:8; CSCO 240-41/Scr.Syr. 102-03, p. 55, 45.



journeyed.<sup>17</sup> The Fathers unfold their theology with its veils of imagery in which we find a wealth of truths clothed in symbols.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, this method of symbolic theology is very helpful for a profound theological vision. Malankara liturgy has a rich Syriac background of the thoughts and symbolic theology of the Syriac Fathers. The prayers in the Malankara matrimonial liturgy also include many patristic symbols and images in which we encounter the incomprehensible theology and mystery of the Church.

### 2.1.3. Symbolic Nature of the Sacraments

Liturgy and sacraments are by nature symbolical. Symbol is something containing a reality to which it points. Symbols explicitly signify divine realities and they are offered to the senses for the sake of signifying something which is truly present. Basically symbols can be classified as signs. Signs lead to something beyond themselves. But at the same time, symbols differ from simple signs. Symbols not only give us information and understanding, but also they touch our imaginations and emotions.<sup>19</sup> Paul Tillich says, "signs do not

<sup>17</sup> *HAzym*. 5:23; CSCO 248/Scr.Syr. 108, p. 12; cf. R. MURRAY, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology", *Parole de l'Orient*, vols. 6-7 (1975-76) pp. 6-8. Ephrem attributes this journey as a journey 'from the Tree (of life) to the Cross, from Eden to Zion, from Zion to Holy Church and from Church to the Kingdom' (*HcHaer* 26,4). In his *HAzym*. III, 10, Ephrem makes a typological comparison between the Jewish Passover Lamb and the True Passover Lamb of the Christians. He says that the old Passover lamb marks only the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, but the new Paschal Lamb effects a double exodus-of the Gentiles from error, and of the Dead from Sheol.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. H. RAHNER, *Symbole der Kirche: Die Ekklesiologie der Väter*, O. Müller, Salzburg, 1964, p. 8

- Cf. B. COOKE, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, Twenty-third Publications, Connecticut, 1983, pp. 42- 44. Signs lead to signify something beyond. For example, smoke functions as a sign because it gives us the knowledge that 'where there is smoke, there is fire'. The 'stop' sign or a national flag give meaning to us. In this sense, persons, things and happenings can become symbols. For example, many consider Adolf Hitler as a symbol of human evil and Mother Theresa as a symbol of human concern and compassion.



participate in any way in the reality and power of that to which they point. Symbols, although they are not the same as that which they symbolize, participate in its meaning and power".<sup>20</sup> Symbol does not mean everything, but it means a thing on its way to becoming much more. The symbol 'gives rise to thought' and it prepares one to reflect. "The symbol is means of knowledge of that which cannot be known otherwise, for knowledge here depends on participation – the living encounter with and entrance into that 'epiphany' of reality which the symbol is".<sup>21</sup> Man himself is a symbol because we call him the image of God. Therefore, the sacraments are the symbolic or ritual acts of incorporation into Christ's grace and mission. Sacraments are dialogic in nature. They are symbols which allow experience and encounter with God. They are symbols of grace coming to visibility. Sacramentality by its very nature demands our participation by which we are creating the Church and the sacramental sign.<sup>22</sup> The sacraments are symbols because they give new meaning to things and they effect

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<sup>20</sup> P. TILLICH, *Theology of Culture*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, pp. 54-58.

<sup>21</sup> A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1973, p. 141. The sacrament is both 'figura et res, veritas et figura'. The connotations of symbol are both cognitive and participatory, for its function is to reunify knowledge as well as existence by reuniting them one with another.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. L. EMPEREUR, "Models for a Liturgical Theology", M. J. TAYLOR (ed.), *The Sacraments: Readings in Contemporary Sacramental Theology*, Alba House, New York, 1981, p. 62. The essence of the sacrament distinguishes it from the 'no-sacrament'. The 'signum' of every sacrament belongs to its essence; cf. A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, p. 137; L. CHAUVET, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Interpretation of Christian Existence*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1995, pp.380-426.



something by their significance. Liturgy and sacraments manifest and convey the mystery of Christ. The liturgy of the sacraments is particularly rich in symbolic gestures and objects. For example, water and oil are used in baptism, confirmation, holy orders and the sacrament of the sick with symbolic meaning. The sacramental actions and gestures such as pouring water or immersion, signing with the cross, laying-on of hands, wearing of the white garment, carrying of the candle... all represent a greater and wider reality and convey a rich meaning.<sup>23</sup> The sacraments enable us to conceive of God's action. The present realities are evaluated in relation to the ultimate values, and they are either rejected or purified, affirmed or transformed in the sacramental action. Thus, "all that is 'sin' is 'put behind' in baptism and penance, the anointing of the sick is the sacrament of restoration to health. Ordination reinterprets authority as service. In marriage, human love is affirmed and ... calling to mutual responsibility, in the Eucharist, we experience the enhancement of all that the body of believers ... and saving fellowship with God".<sup>24</sup>

#### **2.1.4. The Symbolization of the Sacrament of Matrimony**

Matrimony symbolizes the covenant established between God, man and woman. It is God who instituted it and He Himself gave a certain meaning to it. By reason of its symbolic content, matrimony remains a reality of the created order, and takes on a great value in the theology of the Old Testament. The relationship and love between God and His

<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. D. CRICHTON, *Christian Celebration of the Sacraments*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1973, pp. 16-28.

<sup>24</sup> G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, p. 83.



people is symbolized by marriage.<sup>25</sup> Marital love has also its roots, its depth and real fulfilment in the great mystery of the love between Christ and His Church. In this sense, marriage is a sacrament of divine love. The real content and object of this sacrament is love.<sup>26</sup> It is not only an institution but also a covenant in its intimate core - an image of the covenant between God and His people and an image of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Therefore, a particular importance is attached to the 'symbolism of marriage' in the Old Testament and New Testament. In the symbolization of the sacrament of matrimony, the 'centre' image is that of the union of Christ and the Church. That is why, marriage is called *Magnum Sacramentum* or *Mysterium* with its own symbolic association of the Christ-Church union. Thus, the sacrament of marriage gives marriage a new meaning. It participates in the 'great mystery of Christ and the Church' and transforms all human love. In this sense, the sacrament of marriage is a sacrament of love.<sup>27</sup> In the marital life, the self-giving of the spouses is meant to be in terms of Christ's loving gift of self in death and resurrection. In death, Christ has given Himself to those He loves. In this way, Christian marriage becomes a sacrament and paradigm of human love and friendship.<sup>28</sup>

Every sacrament consists of two aspects – self-revelation and self-giving. Revelation is not neutral in its nature, but offers

<sup>25</sup> Cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1984, pp. 44-45.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and*



also grace. In this sense, the sacrament is a gift and a task.<sup>29</sup> It is a gift in the sense that marriage is considered an earthly value which is a 'good gift of God'. This gift of God reveals the fact of salvation in the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace, being realized in Christ and in the Church, is signified still in marriage. In this sense, the meaning of marriage surpasses itself. In the wedding at Cana, Christ used His divine power to elevate marriage and to confer on it a supernatural value. He came to the wedding at Cana in order to honour marriage as good and to reveal the *sacramentum* of marriage and its hidden meaning. Thus, the revelation He expressed at Cana offers also grace. In this sense, the relationship in marriage is a source of grace. In Christian marriage, God Himself presides over the union and ratifies the mutual consent and promises. He makes them one. Matrimony is a sacrament like every other sacrament, and every sacrament presupposes that there is a direct divine intervention. The Christian marriage replaces the natural with the supernatural. The Church's involvement, priestly benediction, the witnesses of the union, ratification of the consent by the heavenly Father ... all these elements make it a supernatural one.

## 2.2. CONJUGAL SYMBOLISM IN SACRED SCRIPTURE

Though the Bible does not give us a single and developed idea of marriage, we find that marriage is an institution which is 'under God', and it expresses the God-Israel relationship. The book of Genesis gives us two accounts of creation, the first representing the priestly tradition (Gen

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Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, *Aussage und Zusage: Zur Indirektheit der Methode Karl Rahners veranschaulicht an seiner Christologie*, pp. 275-77.



1:27-28, 31) and second, the Yahwist tradition (Gen 2:18-24). From these two accounts, it is clear that marriage is part of the order of creation and God Himself instituted it (Gen 1:27-28, 2:18-24). Therefore, marriage comes from God, not from man.<sup>30</sup> It is not purely a human institution. It came from the hand of the Creator. "The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by Him with its own proper laws ... God Himself is the author of marriage".<sup>31</sup> "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). In the creation account God says, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Then God said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:27-28). It is God's matrimonial blessing which makes clear its goodness. God's blessing in Jewish thought was His gift of fertility and the blessing of procreation. Marriage is connected with the mutual attraction and union of the sexes (Gen 2:24); it is characterised by unity and indissolubility (Gen 2:24); and it is oriented towards procreation (Gen 1:28). God blessed the union of Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28), and therefore, marital union is divine and sacred.<sup>32</sup> The creation accounts give a basis for the institution

<sup>30</sup> Cf. A. G. MARTIMORT, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1963, p. 281; cf. also A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, Edizioni San Paolo, Roma, 1996, pp. 13-18; I. RENZO, *Lo Sposo e la sposa: Percorsi di analisi simbolica tra Sacra Scrittura e cristianesimo delle origini*, San Paolo, Milano, 2004, pp. 9-16.

<sup>31</sup> GS 48,1; cf. also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1603, cf. A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. P. HAFFNER, *The Sacramental Mystery*, p. 198; for more on the marriage in the plan of creation cf. X. LEON-DUFOUR (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (translated from the French, *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, Paris, 1962), Desclee Co., Rome, 1967, pp. 294-96.



of marriage. Before creating woman, God puts man into a deep sleep and from his side creates woman and brings her to man - the nuptial presentation of the bride (Gen. 2:23). This text shows the male as the material source of the female. In their union, husband and wife are one - one flesh and one body. God willed in them the notion of one flesh, the woman being 'bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh'. This phrase refers to the single relationship of marriage. God made man and woman, blessed them and told them to 'be fruitful and increase'. This means that marriage is divinely inspired.

Old Testament theology starts from God's creation of man, "male and female He created them and He blessed them and named them 'man' when they were created" (Gen 5:2). He names them, man and woman, together '*Adam*' in which He saw the equality of man and woman as human beings. The creation narrative says that woman was created for man's sake, man being in need of help and completion. Therefore, God created Eve as a suitable helper for Adam and to be his life-long companion. Thus, a man leaves his father and mother for his wife's sake and he becomes one flesh with her - a union which has no parallel in the human order. This union is to be fruitful and to fill the earth. God plans that only in the equality of human dignity, they can become 'one body' (Gen 2:24). God gave man a woman as wife and partner. God saw everything that He had made and did as being very good (Gen 1:31) - marriage, sexuality and fertility. In marriage they enter into a fully personal union, complementing one another that they become one. This relationship and union make them 'one



body'.<sup>33</sup> The deepest purpose of marriage in God's eyes is the oneness of husband and wife.

In short, the Old Testament and other biblical sources reveal that marriage was created by God. It is God who gave woman to the man in the very beginning of creation. "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suited to him" (Gen 2:18). He made the woman of the same species as the man. God made the woman the 'alter ego' of the man and she is made 'from the rib'. "Male and female both, He created them" (Gen 5:2). Man is made by God, woman is made by God from man. God made man and woman destined for each other and they belong to the same group - bone of bone and flesh of flesh (Gen 2:23) which includes being intimately bound together for the same task and the same way of life.<sup>34</sup> Genesis 2:18 shows the idea of monogamy, the union of one man and one woman, and it demands a permanent bond between man and woman as a divine ordinance. Marriage exists for the sake of intimacy and is ordained to intimacy. Therefore, the development of the concept of marriage in the Old Testament tradition has many aspects and it contains social, juridical, ethical and theological elements (Lev 18:6-23; 20:10-21; Dt 21:10-17; 24:1-4). Thus, in the institution of the marriage, we find the purpose of the preservation of the race

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. M. G. LAWLER, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1993, pp. 36-38. We find the matrimony between Isaac and Rebekka (Gen 24), Boaz and Ruth (Ruth chs. 3-4), Tobias and Sara (Tobit chs. 7-8); cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, Augustinus-Verlag, Würzburg, 2003, pp. 17-28.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. V. J. POSPISHIL, *Religious Dimensions in Marriage and Sexuality: Notes to Course Religious Studies*, Manhattan College, Brooklyn, 1970, p. 57.



and at the same time, the juridical and moral reflections such as mutual help, care of the spouses, conjugal love and fidelity.<sup>35</sup>

The nuptial meaning of Genesis is the basis of our understanding of the sacrament of marriage. God created the woman from the side of man. Then He gave Eve to Adam in a nuptial union as the nuptial presentation of a bride. It shows that God is the source of marriage. In marriage, man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh. We see here a re-enactment of the creation in Eden. Marriage is, therefore, a kind of 'sacrament' of God's act of creation and every human spouse is another Adam or Eve.<sup>36</sup> The Old Testament reflects a growing purification of Israel's ideals concerning marriage. Genesis chapter 2 indicates that marriage is not only for procreation, but man and woman are created to support each other in intimate love and companionship. Each completes the other when they love together and become one flesh.

### **2.2.1. The Spousal Images Prefigured in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is seen as the loving relationship in terms drawn from marriage. Marriage reflects the covenant which God had made with His chosen people, Israel (Hos 2:19-20). The

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, pp. 44-45; For more on marriage in the Old Testament, cf. E. BONS, "Ehe im Alten Testament", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, W. KASPER et. al. (eds.), Band III, Herder, Freiburg, 1995, p. 469.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, Alba House, New York, 1990, pp. 6-9; cf. also A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, p. 15



infidelity of the chosen people to the Lord was regarded in the image of unfaithfulness within marriage (Jer 3:13). The marriage contract was considered sacred in the Old Testament, as seen in the Decalogue (Ex 20:14, 17). It is portrayed in the prophetic ideas of unity and indissolubility (Hos 1-3). In this way, matrimony is seen as a covenant. "...Because the Lord is witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Mal 2:14). It was the prophet Hosea who spoke about the covenant relationship of Yahweh and Israel in reference to his own marriage to a harlot wife, Gomer (Hos 1:2-3). As Gomer left him for another, so also Israel abandoned Yahweh in favour of Baal. But Hosea buys Gomer back. His action towards Gomer reveals Yahweh's unfailing love for Israel. In both these cases - that of the human marriage symbol and of the divine covenant symbol - the 'one body' relationship was damaged. But Hosea's action and reaction is modelled on Yahweh's. In this prophetic symbol we find Hosea's steadfast love for Gomer and Yahweh's faithful love for Israel.<sup>37</sup> Yahweh's faithfulness is unending as Hosea's. Here, the meaning is not from human marriage to divine covenant but from divine covenant to human marriage. Yahweh's covenant fidelity is a model for every marriage.

Hosea was the first one who expressed the community of grace existing between Yahweh and Israel. His personal

<sup>37</sup> Cf. M. G. LAWLER, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage*, pp. 39-40. The prophetic activity of Hosea may have taken place between the years 752 and 724 BC; cf. also M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, Jesuit Publications, Malta, 1994, pp. 49-50. For more on the creation narrative and the Old Testament tradition of marriage, cf. K. RAHNER (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, Crossroad, New York, 1982, pp. 906-07.



married life is a message to the people not only in words but also by means of an action. His married life was a prophetically symbolic action that God required from him. In this 'message-by-action' we find two principal elements. Firstly, God asks Hosea to marry Gomer, an Israelite harlot who had been initiated into the fertility rites of the Canaanite worship of Baal. By this action, Yahweh wanted to show that He still loves Israel despite her faithlessness, unchastity and infidelity. Secondly, Yahweh asks Hosea to take Gomer back after she had left him and gone with another man. The secular reality of marriage becomes the image of God's saving action with His people. In this way, Hosea's marital image is a comparison with the relationship between Yahweh and His people within the covenant. The fundamental theme in Hosea's book is 'Yahweh, your God' (Hos 12:9, 13:4, 14:1). Thus, the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is called the marriage relationship.<sup>38</sup>

The book of Jeremiah also speaks of the image of marriage. He points out Israel's infidelity to Yahweh in worshipping the Baals. "As a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the Lord" (Jer 3:20). But Yahweh was always in constant love with His bride, Israel. The book of Ezekiel also, especially chapters 16 and 23, speaks of the image of the infidelity of the 'harlot' and the 'adulteress'. Ezekiel emphasizes the marriage,

<sup>38</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 34-37. Gomer is an image of Israel in her apostasy from Yahweh and a living type of the Israelite woman of that time in which they expected fertility to come from a strange god, Baal. It was really a type of prostitution. Even though she was such a type, Hosea took her to himself as God's envoy.



legally contracted and made in love between Yahweh and Israel which was a covenant relationship permitting no infidelity and, therefore, it was indissoluble. Divorce was in this case a violation against the covenant of God.<sup>39</sup> In the concluding part of chapter 23, Ezekiel gives an admonition to all men and women; and he gives examples for their married lives which imply a moral lesson also.

Wisdom Literature also speaks of the prophetic vision of God's marital covenant with His people. It is more concerned with the moral and religious aspect of marriage. The Song of Solomon was eventually interpreted by Jewish and Christian exegetes as an image of the marital relationship between Yahweh and His bride Israel. The Wisdom literature expresses the married life in a beautiful way (Prov 5:18; 18:22; 19:14; 30:18-19; Sir 25:1; 26:1, 3, 13; 36: 22, 24-25; 23:18-27). Prov 31:10-31 is a hymn of a 'worthy woman and wife'. The same idea is found also in Sir 26:1-4. We see in Tobias' life, a high value on the life of continence. Tobias and his wife began their married life with three nights of continence. Tobias says to Sarah, "Sarah, let us pray to God today, tomorrow, and the next day; because for these three nights we are joined to God. And when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock" (Tob 8:4; 6:16 ff). The book of Tobit presents a highly spiritual aspect of the couple living before God in prayer

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 45-46. For more details on the spousal symbolism in the Old Testament, especially on the books of Hosea, Isaia, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ps. 45, Cantic of Canticles etc. cf. I. RENZO, *Lo Sposo e la sposa: Percorsi di analisi simbolica tra Sacra Scrittura e cristianesimo delle origini*, pp. 19-75.



and fidelity (Tob 8:5-8).<sup>40</sup> The prophet Malachi calls marriage a covenant witnessed by God and therefore he calls divorce, a practice the Lord hates (2:14-15). Since it is a covenant, it demands mutual trust, sacred commitment and spousal fidelity. In short, throughout the Old Testament, the union of God and Israel is depicted as nuptials. God is pictured as the Bridegroom, Israel as the bride; their union is consummated in sacrifice.

### 2.2.2. The Image of Spousal Union in the New Testament

The prophetic symbolism and the covenant relationship of marriage is continued in the New Testament. But the relationship is transformed from Yahweh-Israel to Christ-Church. The New Testament considers marriage as a divine institution rooted in creation. But Christ gave a new interpretation from that of the understanding of marriage in the Old Testament, beyond Mosaic law. For him, it is the will of God that a marriage once contracted, not be dissolved. Since God is the author of marriage, His will cannot be disregarded by man. Therefore, marriage should be monogamous and indissoluble (Mk 10:6-9; Mt 19:4-6).<sup>41</sup> This view of marriage

<sup>40</sup> Cf. J. WICKS, "Marriage: An Historical and Theological Overview", M. J. TAYLOR (ed.), *The Sacraments: Readings in Contemporary Sacramental Theology*, pp. 183-84; cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, pp. 22-28. An important characteristic of Tobias' prayer is the connection between three timely elements – past, present, future – in which the divine care is incorporated into the world.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, p. 47. The nuptial symbolism is very explicit in the New Testament (Mk 2:18-20; Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Jn 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7; 21:9; 22:17). Christ is the Bridegroom in the New Testament as that of Yahweh in the Old Testament. For more on the nuptial symbolism in the New Testament, cf. I. RENZO, *Lo Sposo e la sposa: Percorsi di analisi simbolica tra Sacra Scrittura e cristianesimo delle origini*, pp. 81-119.



is dominated in the New Testament by the teachings of Christ and St. Paul. Christ showed marriage to be an indissoluble bond willed by God. Paul laid the foundation for a specific spirituality for Christian spouses. The Synoptics and Paul reveal the mind of Christ forbidding divorce. Pauline theology of marriage (Eph 5) compares the relations between husband and wife to the relationship uniting Christ and the Church. In marriage, the relationship of both husband and wife become like that of Christ and the Church. Thus, the spousal union becomes the consecration to a life of love similar to that of Christ.<sup>42</sup> In this way, the spousal union refers to the conjugal bond and the irrevocable fidelity (unity and indissolubility) pledged by the spouses. Thus, marriage becomes the image of the union of love which is superior to it and surpasses every other union between human beings. The spousal union as an example of Christ and the Church, must be exercised in Christian marriage.<sup>43</sup>

Christian marriage made by the irrevocable consent of the partners is a covenant in which they give themselves to each other. Their union becomes the sacrament-sign of the love with which God has loved His people throughout the ages.<sup>44</sup> Married love is a covenanted love involving self-sacrifice also. It is not simply a consent, but a commitment to a way of life which demands permanence. It is God who joins the spouses in this sacred bond as they exchange their mutual

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. M. SCHMAUS, *The Church as Sacrament* (vol. 5 Dogma), Sheed and Ward, London, 1975, pp. 282-83; K. RAHNER (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, pp. 907-08.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. L. LIGIER, *Il matrimonio : questioni teologiche e pastorali*, Città Nuova, Roma, 1988, p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. J. D. CRICHTON, *Christian Celebration of the Sacraments*, p. 114.

consent and consummate their nuptial contract by sexual union. Christian marriage represents the mystery of Christ's covenant with the Church. This bond is derived from the 'great mystery' which is signified in the 'one flesh' of the spouses. It is a sign of permanent, interpersonal communion based on the New Covenant of Christ. The New Covenant in Christ is 'new' in the sense of a new dispensation between God and man. He contrasted the New Covenant with the Old. Marriage as the 'sacrament of new covenant' and as the 'sacrament of the great mystery' of Christ and His Church, signifies God's loving election of His people, realized in Christ and in the Church. Within this 'great mystery', the New Covenant is established, a new relationship between God and His people. For Christ, the reality of matrimony was intended by God at man's beginning and He restored it through His death and resurrection. Therefore, Christian marriage is lived 'in the Lord' (I Cor 7:39) and formed by the elements of the saving action performed by Christ.<sup>45</sup>

In Eph 5:21-33, Paul elevates marriage to the spousal union of Christ with the Church. Here, Christian marriage is elevated to a new dignity as a representation of the mystery which unites Christ and the Church. This does not consist in presenting the celebration of Christian matrimony but the life of the baptised couples, husband and wife. He exhorts reciprocal respect and love and invites wives to respect their husbands and obey them; he invites husbands to love the person and body of their wife. The proper model for such a life is the

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, p. 13.



spousal alliance of Christ and the Church.<sup>46</sup> If the first Eve was disobedient to the commandment of God, the New Eve of Ephesians is obedient and helpmate of the New Adam. If the first Eve was responsible for the death and fall of humanity, the second Eve brings about the life for all. Thus, the 'bearer of death' has become the 'bearer of life'.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.2.2.1. The Spousal Union in Christ's Attitude

In His words "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt 19:6) and "whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her" (Mk 10:11), Christ made obligatory for the couple the ideal of the Lord's covenant with Israel, in which the Lord remains faithful even when the Israel turned away from Him through sin and infidelity. Christ, therefore, intends that man and woman should live not as two persons, but as one in this union consecrated by God Himself.<sup>48</sup> He regards marriage as a particular relationship subject to God's active involvement in its creation and continuance.<sup>49</sup> Christ's position regarding the spousal union is clear in the Gospel of Mt 19:1-12 which is

<sup>46</sup> Cf. L. LIGIER, *Il matrimonio : questioni teologiche e pastorali*, p. 212.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. S. F. MILETIC, "One Flesh": Eph. 5:22-24, 5:31: *Marriage and the New Creation*, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Roma, 1988, pp. 96-97. Here the mutuality and subordination within the Christ-Church relationship is understood mainly in terms of salvation process. This process towards salvific unity is realized in the life of the Church. The Church's life is sustained (Eph 4:15-16) and perfected (5:26-27) by Christ.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. J. WICKS, "Marriage: An Historical and Theological Overview", M. J. TAYLOR (ed.), *The Sacraments: Readings in Contemporary Sacramental Theology*, p. 184.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. W. HARRINGTON, *Mark, New Testament Message*, vol. 4, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, 1979, pp. 152-56; M. T. DAVID, *Christian Marriage: A Journey Together*, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, 1983, pp. 84-85.



prescribed in the Malankara marriage liturgy. The Lord emphasises the need of the spousal union to be eternal and indissoluble because it is the divine plan for them to be one. He says that 'they two shall be one flesh. Therefore they are not two, but one body. His attitude towards divorce and the emphasis on the idea of indissolubility is clear in this passage. Here, Christ affirmed the absolute character of marriage and its indissolubility. They are 'one flesh' in His eyes. He gave a new foundation which conferred upon it a religious meaning. By the new covenant which He formed by His own blood (Mt 26:28), He became the Spouse of the Church. Therefore, for baptized Christians, marriage is a 'great mystery in relation to Christ and the Church' (Eph 5:32).<sup>50</sup>

Christ was never opposed to marriage and His positive attitude towards marriage is made explicit in His words in Mt 19:3-12. The emphasis is given to the aspect of the unity and indissolubility of this covenant relationship. The Lord's teachings (Mt 5:32; 19:9; Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18) may be synthesised as follows: one who divorces his wife commits adultery if he marries another; he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery; he who divorces his wife makes her adulterous; and the woman who divorces her husband, commits adultery if she marries another man.<sup>51</sup> Christ's words "what God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mk 10:9) clearly show Christ's attitude towards marriage. He restored the ideal of marriage which God intended from the

<sup>50</sup> Cf. WIÉNER C., "Christ and Marriage", X. LEON-DUFOUR (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 296.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. V. J. POSPISHIL, *Religious Dimensions in Marriage and Sexuality: Notes to Course Religious Studies*, pp. 60-61; cf. also A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, pp. 19-20.



time of creation. Christ treated this union as sacred and the early Church interpreted it as a holy covenant representing Christ's union with His Church.<sup>52</sup> In Christ's attitude, no divorce is permitted for the sake of human motives, no adultery, not even in thoughts, no polygamy, only monogamy (cf. Mt 19: 9).<sup>53</sup>

#### 2.2.2.2. Christ-Church Relation in the Pauline Vision

In Eph 5:21-33, Paul makes the image of the relationship between Christ and new Israel, the Church. This bridal union is clear in Paul's words, "to love just as Christ loved the Church". But in 1 Cor 7:10-11, Paul instructs that "the wife should not separate from her husband and that the husband should not divorce his wife". He makes here the point that it is a life-long union and commitment and they should love each other as Christ's permanent union with His bride, the Church. The Pauline teaching on this human relationship is based on the covenant of love, fidelity and sacrifice. In short, Christ's bridal relationship with the Church is expressed in Eph 5:21-33. Paul makes this relationship in the context of Genesis and relates it directly to married life itself, 'love your wives, as Christ loved the Church' (v.25). Paul applies the love which Christ had for His Church to that which should exist between man and woman in marriage. "Man and woman are definitively placed within the new and eternal covenant, in the spousal

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. G. KOCHAKIAN, *The Sacraments: The Symbols of our Faith*, St. Vartan Press, New York, 1983, p. 53. cf. also J. D. CRICHTON, *Christian Celebration of the Sacraments*, pp. 114-36..



covenant of Christ with the Church".<sup>54</sup> Christ even gave up His life to gain this bride (vv. 25-27). In short, two images are closely interwoven in this passage - Christ's death in which He prepared the Church as a glorious bride for Himself, and baptism in which one is immersed in Christ's death and enters the Church personally. In this way, he becomes a corporate member of the bride of Christ.

The relationship between Christ and His Church represents various phases of marriage - loving surrender (v.25), cleansing (v.26), the marriage ceremony (v.27) and the union and loving care of married life (vv. 29-31). Christ as lover, cares and redeems the Church, and this gesture is presented as a model for the man in his marital relationship with his wife.<sup>55</sup> For Paul, Christian marriage is an image of the indissoluble relationship between Christ and His Church. He interprets that marriage between man and woman should reflect Christ's marriage with the Church which foreshadows Adam's relationship with his wife. In Christian marriage, the spouses preserve this relationship between Christ and the Church and reflect it in their spousal relationship so that the union is actually based on it. When a husband loves his wife as his own flesh, he is doing what Christ does with the Church. This great mystery of the love and union of Christ for the Church constitutes Christian marriage.

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<sup>54</sup> P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. xvi; cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13; *AAS* 74 (1982) 98; cf. also A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, pp. 145-49.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 113-16.



Paul's theology of marriage, and in a particular way, his theme of the 'great mystery' proposes baptism as essential to sacramental marriage. For Paul, Christian marriage has its own purity which demands mutual love between the spouses and establishes a strong and noble family life.<sup>56</sup> Christian marriage is elevated to the supernatural order as it signifies and participates in the 'great mystery'. It is meritorious while spouses are in a state of grace.

### **2.2.3. Christ as the Bridegroom: The New Testament Teaching**

The New Testament teaches that Christ is the Bridegroom of the new covenant and which has its antecedents in the mystery of the union symbolized in the Old Testament by the titles bridegroom and bride. Christ's coming to the people is the coming of a Bridegroom, and therefore, it was a meeting with the bride. Here, the conjugal symbolism is spiritualised in the sense of His marriage with the Church His bride. Christ spoke of Himself as the Bridegroom, taking up the prophetic symbolism of God's 'marriage' with the people of Israel through the covenant. We can find three main Gospel passages for this. First of all, Jesus was defending the disciples when they were accused by the Pharisees of not fasting. Here, He is aware of Himself as 'the Bridegroom'. It is very clear in His answer to the following question: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the Bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Mt 9:15). Again, John the Baptist also

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 46.



gives a similar testimony. He says, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore, this joy of mine is now full" (Jn 3:29). Again, in the parable of the ten virgins Jesus depicts Himself as the Bridegroom. "And while they (the foolish maidens) went to buy the oil, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast" (Mt 25:10). Here, Jesus demands sufficient attention, carefulness, vigilance, full love and so on from the part of the bride.<sup>57</sup> These three Gospel passages refer to the identity of Christ as the Bridegroom. The self-identification with 'the Bridegroom' makes sense of the parable of the marriage feast (Mt 22:1-14) and the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13) who is going to meet the bridegroom.<sup>58</sup> In the parable of the marriage feast, the nuptial mystery of the Kingdom is assimilated to the mystery of Christ, the Bridegroom (Mt 8:11). These are the explicit allusions to Christ as the Bridegroom in the eschatological parables of the kingdom in the Gospel of Mathew. This nuptial mystery consists in the mystery of Christ the Bridegroom united with the Church His bride. Christ acts towards humanity as a Bridegroom towards His bride and He delivers Himself for her (Gal 2:20).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Cf. L. LIGIER, *Il matrimonio : questioni teologiche e pastorali*, pp. 22-23. For more on the image Christ as the Bridegroom and Church as the bride of the new covenant cf. M. F. LACAN, "Spouse", LEON-DUFOUR X. (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, pp. 505-08; L. F. HARTMAN, "Bride and Bridegroom", L. F. HARTMAN (ed.) *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, McGraw-Hill Book, New York (1963) 279-80.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined ....: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 19; cf also R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, p. 276.

<sup>59</sup>Cf. N. ADRIEN, "Judaism and the Christian Liturgy of Marriage: Similarities and Differences", E. J. FISHER, *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, p. 92.



The model of the betrothed couple exists as a reality in the relationship of God with men which has become a nuptial mystery through Christ, the Bridegroom. Christ acts towards humanity as a Bridegroom towards His bride because He loves it and delivers Himself for it (Gal 2:20), as we see in Eph 5:25-27. Christ, the eternal Bridegroom came to save mankind and to save the Church. The coming of the Bridegroom is a new beginning and it will transform all human ways and institutions, including marriage. The love of Christ the Bridegroom has transformed humanity to unite it to Himself and to make it His pure bride. In this redemptive love, He offered Himself completely to His bride which is His own body (Eph 5:28-31).

#### 2.2.4. Source of the Ecclesial Image 'Bride of Christ' in the Scripture

The personification of the Church as the 'bride' is a part of the Scriptural heritage and it is mainly based on the symbolism of marriage between Yahweh and His people (Is 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Hos 2:2 ff, 19-20). In the New Testament, the Old Testament prophetic image of marriage is applied to Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as His bride (Mk 2:19-20; Mt 9:15; 22:1-12; Lk 5:34-35; Jn 3:29; Rev. 21:9-10; 22:17; 19:7; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-33).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Cf. R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, The Mercier Press, Cork, 1960, p. 158; cf. also E. BELLINI, "Sponsa Christi", *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 9, G. PELLICCIA, G. ROCCA (eds.), Edizione Paoline, Roma, pp. 74-75. Sometimes, the notion 'bride of Christ' is attributed to the Church or to the faithful or to the soul or to the consecrated virgin. In the New Testament, the Bridegroom as Christ (Jn 3:29) is expressed, but the spouse is not clearly indicated. However, in Paul and Revelation, the community of faithful is referred to as the bride. Paul attributes the community of Corinth has betrothed to Christ as a 'pure bride to her one husband' (2 Cor 11:2) or the Church (universal?) which has been purified with the waters to be 'without stain... and finally



The Church is presented as the bride of Christ in the Pauline epistles. Paul, in Eph 5:21-32, explains the relationship between husband and wife in terms of the relationship that exists between Christ and the Church, which he calls a *great mystery*. It can be considered as the most profound use of the bride-bridegroom image in the entire New Testament. Here, Paul suggests the relationship between Christ and the Church, a relationship which is and should be expressed in every Christian marriage.<sup>61</sup> In 2 Cor 11:2, Paul again says about 'a pure bride to her one husband'. The eschatological reference of the image of the Church as the bride of the Lamb (Christ) finds its fullest expression in the book of Revelation where we find 'the wedding of the Lamb' (19:6-8). The book of the Revelation applies the metaphor of the bride of the Lamb not only to the Church, but also to the new Jerusalem. Thus, in Jewish-Christian apocalyptic, the image of Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church is strongly favoured. The passages of Rev 19:7-8 and 21:2-3, 9-10 speak of the adorned bride of the Lamb and the bride as the heavenly Church.

Paul's exhortation in Eph. 5:22-33 gives us the symbol of a virgin who becomes the bride of Christ. Applying to the local church also, we see the same image in 2 Cor. 11:2, "I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband". In both places though he speaks of the 'presentation' of the virgin to her husband', in Eph. (5:26-27) it is Christ who presents the virgin to Himself. In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul applies it to the passage of Gen. 2:24. Here, the betrothed virgin who is the

<sup>61</sup> Cf. G. PRESTON, *Faces of the Church: Meditations on a Mystery and its Images*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1997, pp. 81-82.



Church, takes on the characteristics of Eve. In the New Testament, the Church is the new Israel who is the virgin bride of Christ. So, the virgin Church of the Pauline epistle is a personification of the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup>

### 2.2.5. Conjugal Symbolism of Christ and the Church in the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage

In MLM, the spousal union between Christ and the Church is expressed through various prayers. This relation and spousal union are established through the image of the betrothal of Christ to the Church. We find this idea in various prayers and hymns of the liturgy:

(1) "The heavenly Bridegroom (ܡܪܝܢܐ ܡܨܝܚܐ) married Himself to the holy and faithful Church".<sup>53</sup>

(2) "The holy Church (ܩܝܫܬܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ) was betrothed to Christ".<sup>54</sup>

(3) "You betrothed her from water and Spirit and You made her Your bride (ܩܝܫܬܐ ܕܡܝܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ)".<sup>55</sup>

(4) In the *primitia* we find Christ ".... who betrothed to Himself the earthly Church (ܩܝܫܬܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ) and became for her the betrothed One".<sup>56</sup> In another hymn we see,

"You are the young One who betrothed me ..... I am Your betrothed O my Lord, the bride who in Your name was betrothed".<sup>57</sup> Again, in the *sigillu*, the Church says, "On the

<sup>52</sup> Cf. L. CERFAUX, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, Herder, New York, 1963, pp. 248-50.

<sup>53</sup> MLM 49; ET 248; ST 36.

<sup>54</sup> MLM 43; ET 238; ST 31.

<sup>55</sup> MLM 48; ET 234; ST 34.

<sup>56</sup> MLM 47; ET 234; ST 33.

<sup>57</sup> MLM 74-79; ET 255; ST 61.



day I was betrothed, all creation marvelled at the poor one who suddenly became rich. 'Blessed am I, how great I have become'".<sup>68</sup> In the epistle of Paul which is read in the marriage ceremony, we find the same idea of the spousal union between Christ and the Church: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). The main themes and ideas expressed in the above prayers are the following: the spousal relation between Christ and the Church; Christ as Bridegroom and Church as His bride; the holy and faithful nature of the Church; Christ's permanent and eternal union with the Church; the eternal love, fidelity and indissoluble nature in the Christ-Church relation and so on. All these themes express the ecclesiological dimensions of marriage. The main idea inherent in all these hymns, prayers and Pauline letter is that the marriage celebrated in this world reflects the spousal union between Christ and Church. It foreshadows the Old Testament covenant made between God and Israel in which Israel is pictured as God's bride. In the eternal covenant of the New Testament, Christ is presented as the heavenly Bridegroom who has chosen Himself for the Church, the daughter of the Gentiles, and purified her through His innocent blood from all filth and defilement.<sup>69</sup> In MLM, Christ the heavenly Bridegroom is pictured as the real model of every Christian marriage. As the true Bridegroom, He makes an indissoluble covenant and union with His bride the Church. This eternal union is the result of His love towards her in which He purchased her with His innocent blood, separated and purified her, and, finally, accepted her as His bride. Besides

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<sup>68</sup> MLM 55; ET 243; ST 42.

<sup>69</sup> MLM 47; ET 238; ST 33.



all these things, He gave His own Body and Blood as the ring, expressing a sign of His eternal covenant.<sup>70</sup>

The second part of MLM consists of lections, gospel proclamation, admonitions as well as prayers of blessings to the spouses. In the *enkyōnō*, the spousal union of the Old Testament patriarchs like Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel are mentioned. It shows that both the Old and New Testament marriages are integrally related and it expresses the perfection of the old in the new one. In many prayers of MLM, the spouses are called to be faithful in the covenantal love. In the *kūklion* of the second service of the marriage liturgy, many blessings are offered to those who remain faithful in this covenant. Referring to the Psalm 21:1-4, it says that when David submitted himself to God's hands, God fulfilled his heart's desire and blessed him with excellent blessings, length of life and, finally, even the kingship of Israel.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, when spouses submit themselves to God and remain faithful in the covenant, they also will receive innumerable gifts and graces in their life. In the epistle and the Gospel (Eph 5:20-32, Mt 19:1-12) read in the Malankara marriage service, spouses are again called to love as Christ loves the Church and they are obliged to be united inseparably in their marital life.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. T. FAZHOOR, "ἀγάπη" (Marriage), L. MOOLAVEETTIL (ed.), *ἀγρυπνάσι ἀνά μυστήριον* (Sacraments in the Malankara Church), p. 171; A. KAKKANATT, "ἁγιομυστήρια – ἀγιομυστήρια: ἀγιομυστήρια" (vol. 5) (Liturgy: Sacraments and the Great Feasts), A. KAKKANATT (ed.) *ἀγιομυστήρια* (Theological Studies of the Malankara Catholic Church), Sunthimilayam Publications, Tiruvalla, India, 2000, pp. 52-53.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. MLM 61; ET 246; ST 47.



### 2.3. SPOUSAL UNION AS 'GREAT MYSTERY'

The great mystery of the love of Christ for the Church is the model for the love in the Christian marriage. In Catholic theology, spousal union is considered great mystery. Before going into the details of the sacrament of marriage as great mystery, let us examine this concept, especially from the Syriac perspectives. In the Syriac tradition, all sacraments are generally understood as mystery, ܠܝܫܐ (rôzô). The word ܠܝܫܐ or ܝܫܐ means, (a) a secret, mystery, mystical signification, a symbol, a sign (b) a sacrament, the Eucharist. The plural ܠܝܫܐ or ܝܫܐ denote the mystical elements or the sacramental mysteries. In Bible rôzô connotes the salvific plan of God (1 Cor 2:6-13, Rom 16:25-27, Eph 1:10-13, Col 1:26-28, 1 Tim 3:16).<sup>72</sup> rôzô/rôze, in general, means symbols, types; mysteries, or sacraments. In the fourth century this same word rôzô is used for any religious symbol (especially Old Testament 'types') for sacramental rites and, in the plural, for the Eucharist.<sup>73</sup> Ephrem's understanding of symbols offers a sacramental understanding of the world and it is frequently used in the plural rôze in the sense of sacraments. Here, the symbols refer to some aspect of divine reality, which has a deeper significance. Ephrem says, "even though Your symbol may be

<sup>72</sup> Cf. J. P. SMITH (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1998 (first pub. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1903) p. 524; J. CHITILAPPILLY, *Makabramuta: the Divine Dispensation of our Lord in the Holy Qurbana of the East Syrian Tradition – a Liturgico-Theological Study*, PIO, Roma, 1999, pp. 69-71.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. E. BECK, "Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephräm", *Oriens Christianus* 42 (1958) pp. 19-40; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1975, p. 21.



small, yet it is a fountain of further mysteries".<sup>74</sup> In his poetical theological method, Ephrem treats many types, natural symbols and sacramental 'mysteries'. In Christian use *rôzô* is parallel to the Greek word *mysterion* indicating Jesus' 'secrets of the kingdom' and the Pauline 'mystery'. The Bible contains *rôze*, revelatory symbols of Christ. The 'reality' of Christ and of the Church is illuminated by these types. For example, many trees in the Old Testament are seen as types of the cross because the eye of faith sees every tree as pregnant with the mystery of the cross.<sup>75</sup>

The Eastern Churches use the term *rôzô* for mystery (*mysterion*), while the Western Church refers to it as 'sacrament' (*sacramentum*). In its theological sense, the word *rôzô* does not represent something that is secret, obscure, or unintelligible; on the other hand, it refers to something revealed and communicated. Mystery is experienced in celebration and not comprehended by intellect. Mysteries manifest themselves to the heart of the participants through faith. They are really closer to human beings, by being closer to the divine.<sup>76</sup> Thus,

<sup>74</sup> *HFid.* 4:10; CSCO 154-55/Scr.Syr. 73-74, pp. 12-13; 11; S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1992, p. 56.

<sup>75</sup> C.E.R. MURRAY, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology", *Parole de l'Orient*, vols. 6-7 (1975-76) 1-5.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. T. POOVATHANIKUNNEL, *The Sacraments: The Mystery Revealed*, OIRS, Kottayam, India, 1998, pp. 16-17. Etymologically, *mysterium* is that which the content has not been known before but which has been revealed at least to some people. Technically, it denotes the rites and observances of those mystery cults. *mysterion* which is predominantly used in the plural form, is used to denote many ancient mystery cults in the Greek speaking world. The terminological division between the East and West is understood in the understanding of the Greek term '*mysterion*' and the Latin term '*sacramentum*', cf. R. HOTZ, *Sacramente im Wechselspiel zwischen Ost und West*, Benziger Verlag, Köln, 1979, p. 48.



mystery is not a mysterious state in which something or some knowledge is hidden from us. At the same time, being a mystery, it reveals and points out to a greater thing that there are some things beyond our capacity of knowledge. Therefore, it tempts us to search out its real meaning and lead us to a heavenly meaning and an ecclesial vision.

### 2.3.1. Marriage: A Sacrament of 'Great Mystery'

Genesis 2:24, which corresponds to the epistle to the Ephesians 5:21-33, presents a prophecy in action of the union between Christ and the Church. Paul makes a connection between the love implanted in creation by God and the love of Christ. For Paul, Adam is a type of Christ (Rom 5:14, I Cor 15:45-49). Adam reappears in Christ Jesus. The salvation in Christ is concealed in creation. Christ came and won for Himself the Church as His Bride. In marriage, the couple shares the mystery of the marriage of Christ and the Church and thus, it remains a mystery (*mysterium*).<sup>77</sup> Paul calls the nuptial union of Christ and the Church a 'great mystery'. Because she is united to Christ as to her Bridegroom, she becomes a mystery in her turn.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the love of Christian spouses is a sign of the mutual love of Christ and the Church.

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. M. SCHMAUS, *The Church as Sacrament*, pp. 270-71. cf. also O'N. COLMAN, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, Alba House, Staten Island, New York, 1964, pp. 257-59; A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, pp. 105-10.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 772; cf. Eph 5:25-27; 32; 3:9-11; *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. V, 3, 1982 & vol. VI, 1, 1983; cf. also *Uomo e donna lo creò: Catechesi sull'amore umano*, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma, 1985, pp. 349-52; "Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II on the Occasion of the International Youth Year", 10, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), no. 13, April 1 (1985) p. 5.



Marriage as a true institution of the Creator becomes a figure of the mystery of the union of Christ the Bridegroom with the Church His bride. Therefore, marriage celebrated between two baptized persons has been elevated to the dignity of a real sacrament, that is, signifying and participating in this great mystery of the spousal love between Christ and the Church. This aspect is so tied to the essence of marriage as to be inseparable from it.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the sacramentality of marriage can only be understood in terms of 'great mystery' of Christ giving Himself for His beloved spouse, the Church.<sup>80</sup> From the very beginning the Church puts more emphasis to the mystery of Christ and the Church. The model of the betrothed couple exists in the very fact, and the covenant of God with men has become a nuptial mystery through Christ.<sup>81</sup> As a *sacramentum-signum*, marriage is regarded as a symbolic representation of the mystery of Christ and His Church. This mystery encircles the nuptial imagery of the Church the Bride and Christ the Bridegroom. It involves an active role from the part of the Bridegroom, revolving around the salvific mystery of His life. In this mystery, the Bridegroom does whatever He can to make her a worthy partner for Himself. Through the sacrament of matrimony, the love of the spouses enters in the

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, p. 21. The idea of indissolubility makes it easier to understand the sacramental nature of Christian marriage.

<sup>80</sup> For more on the great mystery concerning Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32), submission of the Church to Christ as example for the bride (Eph 5:22-24), the love of Christ for the Church as example for the bridegroom (Eph 5:25-31) etc. cf. J. CAMBIER, "Le grand mystère concernant le Christ et l'Église, Eph. 5, 22-23", *Biblica* 47 (1966) 43-90; 223-242.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. N. ADRIEN, "Judaism and the Christian Liturgy of Marriage: Similarities and Differences", E. J. FISHER, *The Jewish Roots of Christian Liturgy*, p. 92.



splendour of the love of Christ for His Bride the Church. “In virtue of the sacrament of matrimony by which they signify and share (cf. Eph 5:32) the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing of their children” (LG 11).

The text of Eph 5:32 reveals the nature of Christian marriage as a sacrament of the ‘great mystery’. Christian marriage really participates in this ‘great mystery’ and therefore, it is a sacrament of a great mystery of the union with Christ through the union and communion of married life and love. “Whether we treat of its scriptural, dogmatic, moral, human or canonical aspects, Christian marriage can never be understood apart from the mystery of Christ”.<sup>82</sup> In this ‘great mystery’, “the giving-up in self-sacrifice on the cross is not only the ultimate model for husbands, but the birth of the Church from the side of Christ crucified. He dies for her that she might have life. The new Eve is presented to the new Adam, only after she is taken from His pierced side, in the deep slumber of His death”.<sup>83</sup> In connection with Genesis, Paul refers to this bridal union of Christ and the Church. Gen 2:24 reads, “Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh”. In Eph 5:32, we read, ‘this is a great mystery’. The word ‘mystery’ here refers to the salvation and the historic revelation of God. “The *mysterion* is above all the eternal design of salvation, conceived by God, historically carried out by Jesus Christ,

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<sup>82</sup>R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, p. 282.

<sup>83</sup>P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 55.



and made present by the Church. *Mysterion* means, then, the fundamental framework upon which Christian salvation rests. Marriage is incorporated into this all-encompassing reality of salvation".<sup>84</sup>

The secret divine plan is revealed in a human way. It is a symbol of a higher world and an earthly symbol of a divine reality. Paul compares the marital union expressed in the Old Testament as the love Yahweh and His people to Christ and the Church. From the very beginning itself, the Church has emphasized the aspect of mystery of Christ and the Church. In the prophetic writings, the married couple are symbolised in the archetype of covenant which God had made with humanity. In the New Testament, Christ has fulfilled this covenant through His death and resurrection. Thus, the covenant of God that He made with the people has become a nuptial mystery through Christ. This nuptial mystery is seen as a clear doctrine in Eph 5:21-32. Here, Paul sees marriage as a union between heaven and earth as both christological and ecclesial mystery.<sup>85</sup>

Christ acts towards humanity as a Bridegroom towards His bride; Christ loves it and delivers Himself for it (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:25-27). The love of Christ has transformed humanity to unite it to Himself and making it as His pure bride. Christ

<sup>84</sup>G. BORNKAMM, "Mysterion", TWNT 4 (1942) 825-26; 829-30; cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, p. 93.

<sup>85</sup>Cf. R. E. BROWN, *The Semitic Background of the Term 'Mystery' in the New Testament*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1968, pp. 13-20. In this sense, mystery retains a certain degree of the 'secrecy'; and the sovereign freedom and autonomy of the 'hidden God', yet the couple know God's purpose and plan by both the apostolic teaching and by their sacramental incorporation into the supernatural life. Therefore, it is heaven embodied in the events of earth.



offered Himself to His bride. His love is redemptive and His bride has become His own Body. It is similar to the idea of man and woman becoming one body (Gen 2:24). Christ is the head of His body, the Church (Col 1:17-18). The mystery of the relationship between God and humanity can be understood in the union of man and woman. Marriage is a type or symbol of the incarnation of the Son of God who redeemed humanity through His love and offering.

### 2.3.2. 'Concealing and Revealing' Aspects of 'Mystery' in the Pauline Vision

Paul used the term mystery in Eph 5:32 differently from the idea of sacraments and the Hellenistic notion of the pagan mysteries. Christ used the term 'mystery' (Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11; Lk 8:10) as embodying God's hidden design revealed to men of good will, in reference to the 'kingdom of heaven'. *Mysterion* in the Septuagint means the secret plan of the king. Later, it meant God's hidden secrets, namely, God's wisdom shown to His people through His plans, designs, and revelation. So, wisdom and revelation were inseparably linked with *mysterion*. Paul took up the biblical concept of God's mystery and its relationship with divine wisdom and revelation and applied it to Christianity. Therefore, to Paul, mystery means God's plan for the salvation of the world, a plan hidden in the depths of His wisdom, unknown to man until it was revealed by God through His Spirit.<sup>86</sup> For Paul, mystery is the

<sup>86</sup>Cf. C. KUCHARAK, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, Alleluia Press, Allendale, New Jersey, 1976, pp. 38-40. Paul's 'mystery' is not related to any ritual. To the pagans, the 'mysteries' were always rites and cults of emotion, preserved and kept secret by the initiated. The pagan term is always in plural while Paul uses regularly in singular. He is referring to God's plan of salvation, first hidden, then revealed and fulfilled in Christ and His Gospel.



benevolence of God toward man in sharing His life through His Son. God withdraws the veil concerning His plan, and this mystery is revealed in Christ by sending Him to the world, and thus, it is realized in us. In this sense, the three important stages of the mystery are: hidden in God, revealed in Christ, and realized in us.<sup>87</sup>

For Paul, the mystery as the divine plan, conceived under the impulse of love, but hidden from man. Paul makes many references in his epistles with regard to this theme (I Cor 2:7-10; Col 1:25-27; Eph 1:5-10; 3:3-5; 3:8-10). But this hidden plan of God is revealed in Christ through His Incarnation (Rom 16:25-27; Col 4:3-4; Heb 1:1-2; Col 2:2-3) and this mystery is realized in us. Paul says that this mystery is 'Christ in you' (Col 1:25). 'Christ in you' means that the members of the Church, have been incorporated into Christ by baptism. Thus, the union of God and man is achieved through Christ. For Paul, the Church is the complement and extension of Christ and the centre and source of the community of love on earth. So, the mysteries hidden in God, revealed in Christ and realized in us. These are the three stages of mystery in Ephesians. God is sharing His life with man, divinising him through His Son, thus, forming a community of love. In this sense, God reveals His 'mystery' in the Incarnation of Christ, and Christ reveals His 'mystery' in forming the Church 'from His side'. Thus, the Christ-Church relationship is a 'great mystery' for Paul (Eph 5:32). Paul compares this union of Christ and the Church to that of man and his wife in marriage.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *The Mystery of the Church*, The Bruce Publishing Company, New York, 1967, pp.13-14.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *The Mystery of the Church*, pp. 15-18.



Paul equates the 'mystery' with Christ, His Gospel, redemption, and His Church as its nexus with wisdom and revelation (Rom 16:25-27; I Cor 2:7-10, 4:1, 13:2; Eph 1:7-10, 3:3-12, 6:19, Col 1:25-29, 2:2-3, 4:3). Paul here applies 'mystery' to the plan of redemption and salvation as a whole. This salvation brought about by the historical person of Christ through His death. He affirms the sacraments are part of the whole divine plan.<sup>89</sup> In Paul, *mysterion* means a hidden divine plan which is revealed in a veiled manner in the course of time. When Paul says, 'this is a great mystery', he is concerned with something that has a very great and deep significance. He bases it directly on Gen 2:24. It expresses a profound unity and affection between two partners - the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Paul connects it to Christ and His Church (Eph 5:32).<sup>90</sup> "If, in the Apostle's teaching, Christian matrimony as the sacrament of Christ's union with the Church, and as its image and offshoot, is so great a mystery, then that union itself, and in it the Church, is still a greater mystery".<sup>91</sup>

The Pauline doctrine of matrimony presents two distinct and complementary themes. In I Cor 7:1-9, he presents matrimony mainly as the remedy to concupiscence. But in Eph 5: 21-33, he considers matrimony as a "great mystery", as a model of the conjugal, spiritual and mystical life between Christ and the Church. The revelation of the matrimonial

<sup>89</sup> Cf. C. KUCHARÉK, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, pp. 41-45. Christ died in order to save the world, but the death of a god in the pagan mysteries had no saving value. The gods were not saviour-gods, but they were being saved.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, p. 112.

<sup>91</sup> M. J. SCHEEBEN, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, Herder, London, 1946, p. 610.



mystery which we see in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, centring on Christ and the Church, uncovers the figurative bond that oriented the 'initial mystery' towards the 'paschal mystery'. "This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:32). Here, he speaks of the 'revealed mystery'.<sup>92</sup> This Pauline doctrine is relevant from the Old Testament till the present time. In general, Christian matrimony is connected with two mysteries: the Genesis account of the divine institution of the first couple and that of the union of Christ with the Church.<sup>93</sup>

#### 2.4. SPOUSAL UNION AS 'ONE FLESH' IMAGE

Sacred Scripture considers marriage as knowledge because it represents a union much more profound and lasting. Marriage involves a soul, a mind, a heart and a will. Therefore, the union affects the whole person, body and soul - they are two in one flesh. This union between husband and wife is not an experience, but a knowledge or an identity that has permanence in it. This union is more personal than carnal. As the mind and its object are made one in knowledge, so the spouses are made one flesh. Marriage is revealed not only as the symbol of knowledge but as the symbol of Christ's marriage with the Church, which is His spouse (Eph 5:25). So, the fidelity to the spouse is the echo of the fidelity of Christ and His Church. The relation between husband and wife is the relation of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:22-23). As Christ is one Body with His Church, so husband and wife are one flesh

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. L. LIGIER, *Il matrimonio : questioni teologiche e pastorali*, p. 22.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. L. DATTRINO, *Il matrimonio nel pensiero di Giovanni Crisostomo*, Lateran University Press, Roma, 2002, p. 14.



(Eph 5:29).<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “the Lord Himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been ‘in the beginning’: so they are no longer two, but one flesh”.<sup>95</sup> The biblical ‘one flesh’ image is eschatological because it signals an initial realization of the final stage of salvation. Christ creates the New Eve the Church, sustains her (Eph 4:15-16), saves her (5:23c) and purifies her (5:26-27). These actions lead to the eschatological ‘one flesh’ unity. As ‘one flesh’ they have mutual responsibilities in executing God’s plan of uniting all things to Christ. As ‘head’ and ‘body’, Christ and the Church express the mutual responsibility in which the salvific unity occurs.<sup>96</sup> In the ‘one flesh’ union between God of the covenant and the people of Israel, Paul sees the union between Christ and the Church. This union between Christ and the Church is the relationship that should subsist between husbands and wives. The husband and wife are united to become one body.

How do these two become ‘one flesh’? The union of husband and wife refers to the covenant-relation between Christ and Church. Therefore, Paul exhorts the couples to love just as Christ loved the Church. Christ delivered Himself for

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. F. J. SHEEN, *Three to get Married*, Catholic Insight Series, Scepter Publishers, Princeton, New Jersey, 1951, pp. 124-30. The image of ‘one body’ constitutes the very foundation of the Church. The believers are the Body of Christ which is the Church. We find many biblical references indicating this idea (1 Cor 10:17; Rom 12:5; Col 3:15; Eph 2:16, 3:6, 4:4); cf. S. BULGAKOV, *The Bride of the Lamb*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002, pp. 257-58.

<sup>95</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1605.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. S. F. MILETIC, “One Flesh”: Eph. 5:22-24, 5:31: *Marriage and the New Creation*, pp. 97-98.



His bride, the Church. Marriage is a more mysterious-union of two people as one body-person which is the gift of God and the prophetic symbol that exists between Christ and the Church.<sup>97</sup> In matrimony, the husband and wife become 'one in heart, soul and mind'. It is a ministry of love to spouse and children. The alliance and the union of Christ which He made from the very beginning through the mystery of incarnation is the root and ground which binds Him to the Church. This union is not physical, but mystical based on the gift of sanctifying grace. There are many passages which express this mystical union between Christ and the Church. The Book of Revelation views the Church as "the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2). Paul says, "I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband" (2 Cor 11:2). This symbolism is present in the mutual consent of the couples and therefore, it demands the permanency of their marital bond and union. In this way, the love existing between the spouses should be total. "The unity of total love which marriage brings about, is a mystery which defies the basic laws of mathematics. In a simple equation one and one become two, but in marriage, one man and one woman develop a unity or oneness which results in two richer, deeper persons".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. M. G. LAWLER, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>98</sup> M. FOLEY, *Marriage - A Relationship: Preparation and Fulfilment*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1981, p. 9; cf. M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, pp. 22-23.



### 2.4.1. 'One Flesh' Image and the Christ-Church Relationship

The 'one body' or the 'one flesh' image always expresses Christ's indissoluble bond with His spouse, the Church, as the source of the love of the Christian spouses. Thus, it demands the indissoluble bond of marriage. The image 'one flesh' expresses the unity of a kind of blood relationship and the complementary function which they have for each other. It expresses the marital union in its totality by which the two constitute one person. One flesh here means one life.<sup>99</sup> Marriage is a call to divine union in which the spouses become 'one flesh' and they anticipate the blessed union in heaven (cf. Rev chs. 19-22). It is in this sense, Paul instructs the husbands to love their wives as their own bodies (Eph 5:28). For Paul, to love one's wife is to love 'one's own flesh', as Christ does the Church His Bride. The way of mutual giving is necessary in marriage. Therefore, a wife must give way to her husband 'as to the Lord' (5:22), and so must the husband.

In Christian marriage, the mutual love and union of the spouses make them one body in the image of Christ and Church. The love of marriage is for becoming two as one body.<sup>100</sup> Malachi asks, "Has He (God) not made it one?" (2:15). It reflects Gen 2:24 where speaks about Adam and Eve becoming one flesh. "They are no longer two, but one" (Mk 10:8-9, Mt 19:5-6). This human bond is sanctioned as a covenant of God and therefore, it is an indissoluble bond between two persons (Mk 10:12). Augustine sees the 'great

<sup>99</sup> Cf. V. J. POSPISHIL, *Religious Dimensions in Marriage and Sexuality: Notes to Course Religious Studies*, p. 58.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. M. G. LAWLER, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage*, pp.43-44.



mystery' of 'one flesh' in the espousal of the Church in the Incarnation: "The Spouse of Christ is the whole Church, whose principle and first fruit is the flesh of Christ: there the bridegroom is joined to the bride in bodily union".<sup>101</sup> The sacrament of marriage is a sacred symbol which signifies that mystery of Christ's deathless love for His spouse the Church and, causes what it signifies, the indissoluble bond between Christian husband and wife.

The expression 'one flesh' is more clear in the expression she is 'taken out of the rib of the man' (Gen 2:22). Therefore, they become 'one flesh' and 'one life' in marriage. The idea of 'one flesh' is also clear in the expression 'a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Gen 2:24). This social fact of marriage expresses the fact of its divine institution. The inner meaning of marriage is very clear in the expression 'one flesh'. Commenting on the letter to Ephesians, Aquinas explains the signification of 'one flesh' (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31) in the following way: "Spouses are 'one flesh' in three ways: (1) by mutual love, '*per affectum dilectionis*'; (2) by shared lives, '*per conversationem*'; and (3) by sexual union, '*per carnalem coniunctionem*'.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> AUGUSTINE, *In Epistulam Ioannis ad Parthos*, 2.2; PL 35, 1990; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 81. His emphasis on indissolubility and on the sacred symbol of the 'great mystery' as the source of indissoluble Christian marriage, implies the divine grace granted to spouses to preserve the three 'goods' of marriage: *proles* (procreation of children), *fides* (mutual fidelity of the spouses) and *sacramentum* (the permanence of the union).

<sup>102</sup> AQUINAS, *In Ad Ephesios*, 5, lect. 10, 33-34, pp. 76-77; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 93. Aquinas used '*coniunctio*' to denote the union of Christ and His Church. He is of opinion that sexual union is integral to marriage as a complete sign of the union of Christ with His Church.



### 2.4.2. Two in One Flesh or One in Two Flesh?

It is one of the principal difficulties to comprehend the idea that the spouses are two and one at the same time - the duality with the unity. Though they are two, they form one unity.<sup>103</sup> The marital life is a process which results in transforming the two, wife and husband, into one flesh. This biblical image (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31-32) is closely associated with Christian marriage. This image is understood not only with a biological mating, rather it refers to the love relationship established in marriage. It does not mean a fusion of two individuals, but it involves the encounter through which they join their lives into a common project of sharing their journey toward God.<sup>104</sup> This joining of the husband and wife creates a fuller life, a more complex existence for each. Here, there should be genuine giving, receiving, exchanging and sharing. Their interchange is rooted in freedom and their sharing is more spontaneous. There is mutual enrichment on all levels of life. The loving dynamism in the marital relationship implies that each partner will be receptive to and welcome the inevitable changes in their personal life. It needs adjustment, tolerance, radical openness etc. They have to understand that it is a journey together and a common journey of marriage. Tertullian says,

How beautiful, then, the marriage of two Christians, two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice. They are as brother and sister, both servants of the same Master. Nothing divides them, either in flesh or in spirit. They

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. J. HERVADA, *Studi sull'essenza del matrimonio*, Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Roma, 2000, p. 248.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. M. T. DAVID, *Christian Marriage: A Journey Together*, Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1983, p. 41.



are, in very truth, 'two in one flesh'; and where there is but one flesh there so also but one spirit. They pray together, they worship together, they fast together; instructing one another, encouraging one another, strengthening one another. Side by side they visit God's Church and partake of God's banquet; side by side they face difficulties and persecution, share their consolations

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Jacob of Serugh explains the Christ-Church relationship as Bridegroom and the Bride in 'one body' by means of a symbolical and typological exegesis:

"Wives are separated from their husbands by death, but this bride is joined to her beloved by death! He died on the cross and gave His body to the bride made glorious, ....

He opened up His side and mixed His cup with holy blood,... she drank Him in the Wine, so that the world might know that the two of them are one. He died on the cross, .... she is full of love for His death, knowing that from it she has life. Man and wife were the basis of this mystery, they served as a picture and type and image for reality. By means of them Moses uttered this great mystery, covering up and preserving it under a veil so that it should not be laid bare. The great apostle uncovered its beauty and showed it to the world, and so Moses' words, 'the two shall be one', stood illumined".<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> TERTULLIAN, *Ad uxorem*, 2.8-9; PL 1, 1302. He assumes that it was customary for marriages to be solemnised in a Christian manner. cf. W. S. KENNETH, *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, p. 17

<sup>106</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, Hom. 79:149-64, Paris-Leipzig, 1907, p. 287; S. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 76. For further Syriac typological exegesis cf. R. MURRAY, "The lance which re-opened Paradise: a mysterious reading in the early Syriac Fathers", *OCP* 39 (1973) 224-34; S. BROCK, "The Mysteries hidden in the side of Christ", *Sobornost*, vol. 7 (1978) 462-72.



In his typological association, Jacob of Serugh expresses the idea of this perfect union and comments on the biblical passage 'two shall become one' in the following way: "A man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall be one, is interpreted as a type of the union between Christ the Groom and Church His bride, in the Jordan waters".<sup>107</sup> Again he says, "Moses wrote this prophecy, how Christ and his Church become one from the (baptismal) water ... He put on her in the womb of virginity, and she put him on in the waters of baptism, and behold, the Groom and Bride are perfected as one spiritually".<sup>108</sup>

## 2.5. SPOUSAL UNION AS INDISSOLUBLE RELATIONSHIP

The idea of the permanent nature of marital love is repeated many times in MLM. This eternal nature of Christian marriage is compared to Christ's eternal love to the Church. Since it is a main characteristic of sacramental marriage, the Church prays for the couple to remain in this eternal and permanent love. In one of the prayers of the first service of the marriage we find, "... that there may be unity of heart between them, that they may love each other for ever ...".<sup>109</sup> It expresses the need of a strong unity of hearts among them, and to receive each other with full love. "That they may have true love, concord, peace and impassible unity among them..".<sup>110</sup> It

<sup>107</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, p. 288; cf. S. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 341.

<sup>108</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, p. 310; cf. S. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 341.

<sup>109</sup> MLM 44; ET 237; ST 32.

<sup>110</sup> MLM 52; ET 241; ST 38.



demands certain characteristics on the part of the couples. In the *sigitô*, Christ promises the Church His eternal presence in their spousal love. It is really a model for couples to be faithful in their marital bond. The Church is aware of her Bridegroom's promise, "And he promised me 'I am with you till the end of the world'".<sup>111</sup> In the opening prayer of the second service, the priest prays, "O Lord, invite us too, to Your everlasting joys".<sup>112</sup> In another hymn, we find that the Church is confident in His eternal love: "Behold, in your love, O my Lord, I am taking refuge, and in Your love am I inflamed".<sup>113</sup> The Church is fully confident in the indissoluble love of her Bridegroom. All these prayers emphasises the eternal and indissoluble relation of Christ's union with the Church His bride. In this sense, Malankara liturgy gives much stress to the indissoluble nature of marriage based on the indissoluble union of Christ and the Church. Marital love and bond are eternal and permanent 'until death do us part'. This bond is a permanent union and communion of two persons, and it distinguishes marriage from simply 'living together'. This 'one-flesh' life is for ever. This mystery of 'oneness in two' makes the marriage something different and indissoluble which characterises it as a sacrament. Christ insisted that the marital bond and love are eternal, sacred and inviolable. "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt 19:6). Therefore, the sanctity, indissolubility and the inviolability comes from the intervention of God.

### **2.5.1. Lifelong Commitment in Marriage as Christ's Love for the Church**

The Christ-Church love is the fundamental basis and structure of every marital life. Christ's eternal and permanent

<sup>111</sup> MLM 56; ET 243; ST 42.

<sup>112</sup> MLM 59; ET 245; ST 46.

<sup>113</sup> MLM 79; ET 255; ST 62



love for the Church demands the life-long commitment of spouses in the marriage. In the institution of marriage, God willed it to be perpetual. It demands the lifelong commitment and for the whole duration of life of the spouses. This lifelong union must not be rescinded except by death. This permanent union follows the model of Christ's eternal love for the Church. Catholic theologians call this property of permanency 'indissolubility'. Marriage is intrinsically indissoluble according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, though the Church allows divorce or dissolution in some exceptional cases. The pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* speaks of the lifelong covenantal commitment of the spouses and the permanent nature of their marital union because this marital union is modelled on the Christ-Church union. "The intimate union of marriage as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them" (GS 48). Christ acts in the spouses' love through the Church, and thereby empowers them to be fruitful and faithful. He graces their marriage with the gift of indestructibility.<sup>114</sup>

## 2.6. SPOUSAL UNION AS SACRAMENT IN THEOLOGY

The spousal union is a sign of a deeper union between Christ and the Church. The human and the divine become one in this sacrament. Thus, marriage becomes an image of the 'marriage' between God and humanity, or between Christ and

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<sup>114</sup>Cf. T. MACKIN, "Ephesians 5:21-33 and Radical indissolubility", T. P. DOYLE, *Marriage Studies*, Canon Law Society of America, Washington D.C., 1985, p. 9; C. DUPRÉ, "The Indissolubility of Christian Marriage and the Common Good", W. W. BASSETT (ed.), *The Bond of Marriage*, The University of Notre Dame Press, London, 1968, pp. 181-204.



the Church. Both the exterior sign (*sacramentum*) and the interior sign (*res et sacramentum*) produce the grace specific to this sacrament (*res sacramenti*) of marriage. This grace enables the couple to live their sacramental union which mirrors the mystical union between Christ and His Church.<sup>115</sup> In this sense, there is a great need for a deeper understanding of the sacramental mystery of marriage.

### 2.6.1. The Sacramental Nature of Marriage in the Ecclesial and Magisterial Teachings

The Catholic Church solemnly teaches that marriage is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ.<sup>116</sup> This

<sup>115</sup>Cf. L. BOFF, "The Sacrament of Marriage", M. J. TAYLOR (ed.), *The Sacraments: Readings in Contemporary Sacramental Theology*, p. 193. cf. also O'N. COLMAN, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, pp. 259-61, 69-72. The term 'symbolic reality' is a translation of the expression '*res et sacramentum*', literally, a thing or a reality and a sacrament. For example, in marriage, the sacred bond between spouses is the symbolic reality; real, because it truly unites husband and wife, symbolic, because it is an image of the love of Christ and the Church on earth (Eph 5:32). In Eucharist, the blessed sacrament is the symbolic reality, a reality because the real Body of Christ is there present, a sacrament, because it is an abiding sign and cause of grace; cf. B. LEEMING, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, Westminster, Maryland, 1956, p. 251; E. TURNER & P. R. FRESE, "Marriage", *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, M. ELIADE (ed.), MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, 1983, pp. 218-21.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, *Canones de sacramento matrimonii*; DENZINGER H., *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. xxxvi, Herder, Freiburg (1976) no.1801: "Si quis dixerit matrimonium non esse vere et proprie unum ex septem sacramentis Legis evangelicae, a Christo Domino institutum, sed ab hominibus in ecclesia inventum, neque gratiam conferre: anathema sit"; cf. also A. G. MARTIMORT, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, pp. 290-91. For more on the divine institution, cf. J. POHLE, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, vol. 1, Herder, London, 1915, pp. 97-109; L. OTT, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik*, Herder, Freiburg, 1970, pp. 549-58. The number of sacraments was declared to be seven, first at the Second Council of Lyons (1274), then at Florence (1438-1445), and finally defined under anathema as seven and seven only, at Trent (1545-1563).



teaching of the Council of Trent has been embodied also in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. The theological doctrine on the sacramental nature of the marriage states that it is properly and truly a sacrament of the evangelical rule. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that, "the matrimonial covenant, by which a man and woman establish between themselves, a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament".<sup>117</sup> The sacrament of marriage transforms the foundations of the union between man and woman. It is not only a question of love, but a call and confirmation from God. They become a sign of the presence of God.<sup>118</sup>

Like other sacraments, marriage also has the three dimensions: an anamnestic (memorial of past events), a saving reality in the present (actuation), and a pledge of glory yet to come (prophecy). Pope John Paul II calls these three-fold marital dimensions as memorial, actuation and prophecy. Marriage is a 'memorial' (*anamnesis*), a sacred re-presentation. It 're-calls' and makes present Christ's espousal of His Church in the Incarnation and death for His beloved spouse on the cross. The couples 're-enact' this memorial. The consent of the couple through which they enter and live out is the

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<sup>117</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1601; cf. CIC can. 1055,1; GS 48,1; cf. also A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, pp. 99-100; 113-15; 127-30.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. J. VANIER, *Man and Woman He Made Them*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1985, pp. 127-28.



*sacramentum tantum*. Marriage is an 'actuation' because the consent and consummation establishes the abiding reality, the indissoluble bond, 'that which God has joined together'. Therefore, it is the abiding *res et sacramentum*. As 'prophecy', it means both God's words concerning the present and future life. It is the most fruitful ecclesial form of the *res tantum*, the life of grace in the family.<sup>119</sup> In this sense, there is a strong connection between the indissolubility and sacramentality of marriage. They together constitute a circle and related one to the other in the sense that indissolubility as the foundation which allows us to recognize the sacramentality of marriage, while the sacramentality of marriage constitutes the intrinsic foundation of its indissolubility.<sup>120</sup> Thus, the sacramentality of marriage makes us remember what God has done in the past (memorial), what He offers in the present married life (actuation) and what He promises in the future life (prophecy) for those who are faithful in their marital life. Thus, marriage recalls and re-lives the acts of the Creator. It is the 'lived sacrament' of life and love. The ultimate purpose of this sacrament is the salvation of married Christians. Therefore, the sacramentality of Christian marriage is evident, if one does not separate it from the mystery of the Church.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio* 13; *AAS* 74 (1982) 93-96; Here, the Pope speaks about the vocation of man to love, the spouses as witnesses of salvation and the marriage as a source of sanctity; cf. H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos. 4700-16, pp. 1782-90; cf. also A. G. MARTIMORT, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, pp.296-98.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. K. REINHARDT, "Sakramentalität und Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe in dogmatischer Sicht", K. REINHARDT & H. JEDIN (eds.), *Ehe, Sakrament der Kirche des Herrn*, Berlin (1971) 36-38; cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, pp. 99-100; M. J. SCHEEBEN, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, pp. 593-610.



In his Encyclical on marriage *Casti Connubii*, Pope Pius XI insists both the act of consent and the union which are the twofold essential elements of marriage. In this encyclical, he solemnly reaffirms the elevation and consecration, made by Christ, of the matrimonial contract as an 'efficacious sign of the grace'. Christ made it a sacrament and a sanctifying symbol of the indissoluble bond which to Him ties His Church. The encyclical expresses the Church's developing awareness of the sacramentality of marriage. Pius XI reaffirms that marriage is a sacrament instituted by Christ. For him, the spouses enjoy a three-fold grace in marriage as a permanent, lived sacrament: (1) increased sanctifying grace (2) a special grace elevating and perfecting natural power; (3) the right to actual graces.<sup>121</sup> *CC* sees a sacredness and a religious character of Christian marriage which is intimately connected with religion, and arises from the divine origin. In this sense, marriage acquires a new element of dignity which comes from the sacrament. This religious character of marriage, its sublime signification of grace and the union between Christ and the Church evidently presents marriage as a 'great sacrament' for the Apostle (cf. Eph 5:32). Here, the encyclical expresses the idea that marriage is a sacrament since every Christian marriage is imaged to the archetype of Christ and the Church.<sup>122</sup> We find again the rich

<sup>121</sup> Cf. PIUS XI, *Casti Connubii*, AAS 22 (1930) 543-78; cf. B. LEEMING, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1956, p. 106; P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined ....: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 111. Pius XI emphasises on the grace of the sacrament (*CC* 40, DS., 3714); C. CLAUDIA, *The Papal Encyclicals, 1903-1939*, McGrath, Wilmington, North Carolina, 1981, P. 397; F. ESPOSITO., *Matrimonio: Società d'amore*, Pont. Univ. Lateranense, Roma, 1966, p. 163; G. H. JOYCE, *Christian Marriage: an Historical and Doctrinal Study*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1933, pp. 146-48; BOFF L., "The Sacrament of Marriage", M. J. TAYLOR (ed.), *The Sacraments: Readings in Contemporary Sacramental Theology*, pp. 197-200.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. PIUS XI, *Casti Connubii*, AAS 22 (1930) 552.



restatement of the sacramentality of marriage in other Encyclicals such as the *Mystici Corporis Christi* of Pius XII, the *Humanae Vitae* of Paul VI, and the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* of John Paul II.<sup>123</sup>

### 2.6.2. The Sacramentality of Marriage in Fathers and Theologians of the Church

The Fathers, when they speak about marriage, are more concerned about the state of marriage (*matrimonium in facto esse*) and not with its rite. With regard to the sacramentality of marriage, the Fathers were led by Gen 2:24 refer directly to Eph 5:22. This theme is developed in two directions: first, more strictly to its pastoral character and secondly, to the theological-dogmatical character. The first sees in the Pauline discourse a source of practical directives with which spouses must inspire their conjugal life. In this context, the two terms: Christ-Church and bridegroom-bride are connected through the concept of imitation. The bridegroom and the bride must behave like Christ in His relation with the Church. Theologically, the second line of development is that which constitutes a decisive stage towards the affirmation on the sacramentality of matrimony. Therefore, the Fathers are of the opinion that matrimony is absolutely indissoluble. There are many Fathers and theologians who have approached the theme of marriage as a sort of 'variation'. They have situated

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<sup>123</sup> For more details on these documents cf. Encyclical *Mystici corporis* of Pius XII on Church as the Mystical Body of Christ (29 June 1943), AAS 35 (1943) 200-243; Encyclical *Humanae vitae* of Paul VI on sexuality, marriage and family (25 July 1968), AAS 60 (1968) 486-92; and the apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio* of John Paul II (22 Nov. 1981), AAS 74 (1982) 92-149.



the matrimonial bond in a new light of peculiar interpersonal relationships. The Fathers of the Church both of East and West such as Ignatius of Antioch, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, Tertullian, Augustine have written extensively on marriage in the early Church, on marriage customs and rituals, theology of marriage, its sacramental nature and sacredness.

Tertullian, against Marcion the heretic who condemned marriage, defends the goodness of marriage. He speaks of the presence of Christ in the marriage by quoting Christ's own words that 'where two are together, there also is Christ'.<sup>124</sup> He is of opinion that the heavenly Father protected the marriage with His gift of salvation, and Christ is present in any marriage made 'in the Lord'. He says that they are truly 'one in two flesh' (Gen 2:24, Mt 19:6). He says that where there is one flesh, the spirit also is one. He describes Christian marriage as "that which is joined together by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels and ratified by the Father".<sup>125</sup> His comment indicates that marriage is a state of life endowed with its own grace.

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. TERTULLIAN, *Ad uxorem* 2,7; PL 1, 1299; *Ad uxorem* 2,9; PL 1, 1302. Tertullian who was born at Carthage between 150-160 of a pagan family and later around 190 converted to Christianity wrote many treatises concerning marriage and chastity such as *To His Wife (Ad uxorem)*, *Exhortation to Chastity*, *On Marrying only Once*; cf. B. de MARGERIE, *Introduzione alla storia dell'esegesi*, vol. II, p. 19; L. OTT, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik*, p. 551.

<sup>125</sup> TERTULLIAN, *Ad uxorem*, 2,8, 9; PL 1, 1302 (*ecclesia conciliat, et confirmat oblatio, obsignat benedictio, angeli renuntiant, Pater rato habet*); cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 75; cf. T. P. HALTON, *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, St. Pauls, Boston, 1999, p. 157; G. H. JOYCE, *Christian Marriage: An Historical and Doctrinal Study*, p. 162; cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, pp. 75-82.



According to Hugh of St. Victor (1079-1141), every marriage is a *sacramentum*. But there is a difference between the *sacramentum* of marriage of baptised persons which is a sacred and a sanctifying event and the marriage of the unbaptised persons which is surely a holy material bond but lacks grace - valid but infertile sacrament. The bond of love (*vinculum caritatis*) is the element in the constitution of the *sacramentum*. The sanctifying character of marriage is seen as the sacrament of God's love for humanity. This is where the idea developed that marriage is the '*sacramentum* of Christ and His Church' and therefore, it is indissoluble. For him, in marriage there are 'two sacraments': "The greater 'sacrament' is spiritual married love, the '*dilectio mutua animarum*' of the spouses, signifying the union in love between God and the soul. The lesser 'sacrament' was sexual union, signifying the 'great mystery' of Christ and His spouse, the Church".<sup>126</sup>

Thomas Aquinas groups marriage in a special category with three other 'great' sacraments - Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Each is 'great' in its own way: Baptism because of its effects; Confirmation because of its minister, the bishop; and the Eucharist because it contains the whole Christ. For him, marriage is also 'great' because it signifies the union between Christ and His Church. Aquinas bases the indissolubility of marriage on the fact that it is a 'sacrament

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. HUGH OF ST. VICTOR, *De sacramentis* II, 11,8; PL 176, 496; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 87; Hugh's theology of the 'great mystery' on two levels was a theocentric understanding of marriage as a created reality. He used 'sacrament' to denote non-sacramental marriage; Cf. also A. E. NICHOLS, *Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1994, p. 274.



of the indissoluble bond of Christ and His Church' and the 'sacral sign of Christ and His Church' is a specific marital union.<sup>127</sup> In *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas explains why it is a sacrament: For him, this is a union of a man and a woman for procreation and nurture oriented to the good of the Church and this sacramental nature consists of its imaging a spiritual reality. He says that the union of Christ and the Church itself is a grace. Therefore, when Christian spouses image this union, they also are graced. Through the marriage, they are joined to Christ in His indestructible union with the Church. "And just as in the other sacraments a spiritual reality is imaged by a sensate action, so in this sacrament the union of Christ and the Church is imaged according to what the Apostle wrote to the Ephesians: 'This is a great sacrament. I say this in reference to Christ and the Church'".<sup>128</sup>

Though there was the assertion about the *Septenarium* (seven sacraments) already before the time of Peter Lombard (1095-1160), he consecrated it strongly. He included marriage in his list of seven sacraments. He says that as a sacred sign (*sacramentum-signum*) of saving reality and as a sign of its sublime mystery, marriage is also considered a sacrament, like all the other sacraments. The view as *sacramentum-vinculum*

<sup>127</sup> Cf. AQUINAS, *In I ad Cor* 7,1; *In IV Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a.1; *In IV Sent.*, d. 27, q. 1, a. 2; *Super epistulas S. Pauli lectura*, ed. Raphaelis Cai, OP., ed. viii revisa, vol. II, Marietti, Torino e Roma, 1953; *Ad Ephesios*, cap. V., lect. X, 334, p.77; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. xxii.

<sup>128</sup> AQUINAS, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV 78; Editio Leonina manualis, Romae, 1934, p. 543; cf. T. MACKIN, "Ephesians 5:21-33 and Radical indissolubility", T. P. DOYLE, *Marriage Studies*, p.16; cf. also P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, pp. 90-93.



(the sacrament as a sacral bond) also influenced for this thought. In this sense, marriage is regarded as an effective saving sign and an effective sign of grace.<sup>129</sup>

For Augustine, matrimony is qualified as 'great mystery' (*magnum sacramentum*), and is instituted by God in the very beginning in Eden (Gen 2:24). The relation originates from Gen 2:24 goes to Christian matrimony, descends from the *magnum sacramentum* of Eph 5:31-32 to the Christian marriage, with a title 'exemplary model'. Augustine by referring to the symbolism of marriage in Eph 5:21-32, calls marriage a *sacramentum*. For him, it involves both the indissoluble bond of a 'sacral' obligation and a sacred sign. Augustine insists on the social value of the union of husband and wife and synthesizes marriage in the three 'goods' or essential values: mutual fidelity (*fides*), offspring (*proles*), and indissolubility (*sacramentum*).<sup>130</sup> Here, he calls the

<sup>129</sup> Cf. P. LOMBARD, *Sententiae in IV Libris distinctae, Lib. IV.*, Tom. II, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata, Romae, 1981, pp. 233-40; cf. also R. HOTZ, *Sakramente im Wechselspiel zwischen Ost und West*, p. 75. The symbolical number seven of the sacraments reminds us the seven gifts of the Spirit.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De bono coniugali* 32; PL 40, 394; cf. T. P. HALTON, *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, p. 257. Mutual fidelity or conjugal fidelity is a fundamental theme of Augustine's matrimonial ethic. He defines fidelity as 'no relations with any other person outside the marriage bond', offspring is much more than the procreation, that means, the children are to be lovingly received, brought up with care and good education; good of the sacrament means that the marriage bond is not to be broken and it is indissoluble. Augustine, who born at Thagaste in 354, is rightly described as the 'greatest of the Fathers and one of the outstanding geniuses of the human race'. His main works are: *The Confessions*, *On the Trinity*, *On Christian Doctrine*, and *The City of God*. He deals the theme of marriage in a lot of his *Sermons*, *On the Good of Marriage*, *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* etc; For Augustine's theology on the economy of salvation, concept of 'sacramentum' etc. cf. B. de MARGERIE, *Introduzione alla storia dell'esegesi*, vol. III – S. Agostino.



*sacramentum* the inseparable union itself. As the 'sacramental sign' marriage refers to the mystery of the unity existing between Christ and the Church.<sup>131</sup> The husband-wife union is the small *sacramentum*, as the Christ-Church union is, according to Paul, the great *sacramentum*. "Therefore, that which is great in Christ and in the Church is quite small in each and every husband and wife, but is the *sacramentum* of inseparable union".<sup>132</sup> In defending the goodness of marriage, Augustine speaks of Christian marriage as excelling in sanctity as a sacrament. In marriage, he saw the human, religious commitment raised to a sacred signification of Christ's love for His spouse the Church, 'the great mystery'. Commenting on the feast at Cana, he says that Christ came to the wedding to give His divine approval and 'to reveal the sacrament' (the sacred symbol) of marriage.<sup>133</sup> For Augustine, marriage is indissoluble, inviolable and therefore, it is holy. It is a natural *sacramentum-vinculum*- a sacral bond of indissoluble obligations.

Origen claims that marriage is a divine gift of salvation because it was God who Himself created it. Commenting on the Gospel of Mathew, he refers to the grace in marriage in which God makes the spouses one. Origen says:

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 9.7.12; PL 34, 397; cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 281-82; C. KUCHARÉK, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, p. 309. For more Augustine's doctrine on sacrament, cf. T. POOVATHANIKUNNEL, *The Sacraments: The Mystery Revealed*, pp. 345-56; J. R. CONNERY, "The Role of Love in Christian Marriage", T. P. DOYLE, *Marriage Studies*, pp. 188-91.

<sup>132</sup> AUGUSTINE, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 1, PL 44, 420; cf. T. MACKIN, "Ephesians 5:21-33 and Radical indissolubility", T. P. DOYLE, *Marriage Studies*, p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE, *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus*, 9.2; PL 35, 1459; P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, pp. 80-81.



"It is God who united the two into one, so that from the time the woman is joined to her husband, they are two no longer. And since God united them, therefore, those who have been united by God have received a grace. And Paul knowing this tells us that marriage which is according to the Word of God is a grace, no less than celibate chastity is a grace".<sup>134</sup>

Ambrose of Milan says that anyone who lost fidelity in marriage, lost God's grace also.<sup>135</sup> He refers Christian marriage as 'sanctified by Christ' (*sanctificatum a Christo*).<sup>136</sup> Jerome says about the love of the Christian couple, as an image of the holy union formed between Christ and the Church. For him, this similar bond can be formed between husband and wife. As the Church is submissive to Christ, so the wife should be submissive to her husband. The spouses should be bound to the same relationship as that of Christ as head and the Church as subject.<sup>137</sup> Clement of Alexandria sees the presence of Christ

<sup>134</sup> ORIGEN, *In Evangelium secundum Matthaem*, PG 13, 1229; cf. G. H. JOYCE, *Christian Marriage: an Historical and Doctrinal Study*, pp. 160-61.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. AMBROSE, *De Abraham* 1,7; PL 14, 442. Ambrose of Milan born in an aristocratic family in 339/40 at Trier and later transferred to Milan. He is well-known for restoring unity and organizing the liturgy and for his fundamental teaching on the Christian sacraments. He speaks of marriage and virginity in his treatises *on Paradise*, *Hexaemeron*, *Exposition on the Gospel of Luke* etc.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. AMBROSE, *Epistola 42 ad Siricum* 3; PL 16, 1124; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .....: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 77.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. JEROME, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* 3, 5; PL 26, 530-37; cf. T.P. HALTON, *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, p. 243; Jerome who born in Dalmatia around 331, was one of the most outstanding figures of the Christian West in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He began to be attracted to the ideal of ascetical monasticism and the study of Sacred Scripture. His scholarly activities are basically three: translations, polemical doctrinal works, and biblical commentaries. His immense task of the revision of the biblical text, and the related translation into Latin which constitutes the well-known *Vulgate*, has secured him an important place in Church history.



in marriage and family, referring to Mt 18:20.<sup>138</sup> He affirms that marriage is a holy vocation. Therefore, he invites husband and wife to regulate their own conduct and insists on the necessity of taking care of the internal, rather than the external.

Many Fathers of the Church related marriage to the miracle at Cana by which Christ blessed the marriage, and included it in the plan of redemption. For them, in the wedding at Cana, Christ used His divine power to elevate marriage and to confer on it a supernatural value. Many Eastern Fathers emphasised Christ's presence and miracle at the marriage of Cana in which they could see the radical transformation of marriage into a sacred state. They are of opinion that the Son of God sanctified the marriage at Cana by His presence there. Epiphanius (4<sup>th</sup> c.) comments on the water changed into wine as the eradication of the carnality of marriage.<sup>139</sup> Cyril of Alexandria sees in the feast at Cana, Christ by His presence, sanctifying the very beginnings of human generation in marriage.<sup>140</sup> Theodoret (5<sup>th</sup> c.) sees the new wine at Cana as the Lord's own gift of marriage.<sup>141</sup> Because of this emphasis on Christ's presence at Cana, the Eastern churches give much

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromata*, 3:10; PG 8, 1169-70; P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 76. Clement of Alexandria who born around 150 in Athens of a pagan family and later converted to Christianity, treated the theme of marriage in his writings *Stromata*, *Paidagogos* ..etc.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. SAINT EPIPHANIUS, *Adversus haereses Panarium*, 2: 30; PG 41, 941; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 77.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, 2.1; PG 73, 224.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. THEODORET, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium*, 5.25; PG 83, 537; P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 77.



importance to the presence and blessing of a priest in Christian marriage.

On the exemplary plan of Christ and His Church, John Chrysostom defined woman's submissive role and of the dominion of the man in terms of body and head. For him, the husband and wife are like complementary elements of a single reality. Commenting on the biblical saying 'they will be two in one flesh', Chrysostom says, "To seal the unity and the intimate fusion joining the two partners a baby is born to them which is like a bridge, a point of conjunction between them".<sup>142</sup> For him, marriage is a mystery and a type of a mighty reality. It is a type of Christ and the Church. The first mode of developing this theme is as follows: the union between Adam and the Eve is the pre-figuration and the beginning of the union between Christ and the Church which is oriented towards a sign of matrimony.<sup>143</sup> In this mystery, the spouses come together, and the two make one. The wise counsel of God at the beginning divided the one into two; now in marriage, He makes the two into one. Man and woman are not two persons, but one. They are one, for she was made from his side (Gen

<sup>142</sup>CHRYSOSTOM, *Propter fornicationem*, 3; PG 51, 213; *Elogium Maximi* 5, PG 51, 232; cf. T. P. HALTON, *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, pp. 311-12; cf. also C. SCAGLIONI, "Ideale coniugale e familiare in San Giovanni Crisostomo", R. CANTALAMESSA (ed.) *Etica sessuale e matrimonio nel cristianesimo delle origini*, SPM, Milan, 1976, 315-45; Chrysostom who born in Antioch dated between 344 and 354, dedicated himself to the ascetical life lived in a solitary cave to lead a life of austerity and study of the Scriptures. He was entrusted the great task of preaching in the metropolitan church. He fulfilled this duty brilliantly, by succeeding in winning over the masses by his eloquence and thus, he was called 'Golden Mouth'. His literary production can be divided into two main sections: homilies and treatises.

<sup>143</sup>Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *Homiliarum in Genesim* 56,1; PG 54, 487. L. DATTRINO, *Il matrimonio nel pensiero di Giovanni Crisostomo*, p. 11.

2:21), and they are, as it were, two halves. For this cause, He honours their cohabitation away from the parents, to show that they are one.<sup>144</sup> Marriage is not a commercial venture but a fellowship for life. The man who takes a rich wife takes a boss rather than a wife because money is of no use when we do not have a partner with a good soul.<sup>145</sup> So, it is better to seek the beauty of soul and to imitate the bridegroom of the Church.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, the theology of spousal union between Christ and His Church has been explored. In this spousal union, Christ and the Church are imaged as Bridegroom and bride respectively. Their bond of union is the concept of life. Therefore, the Church is always understood only in relation with Christ, and thus, she is inseparable from Christ. This spousal union is expressed as the covenant, 'great mystery', 'one flesh', indissoluble and sacrament. All these aspects reveal the theological dimension of marriage. We have seen that every Christian marriage is an image of the permanent relationship between Christ and the Church.

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *On the Epistle to the Colossians*, Hom. 12, 5; PG 62, 387-88; cf. T. P. HALTON, *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, p. 321-22. By Interpreting Paul's I Cor 7:38, Chrysostom in his *De Virginitate*, refers to marriage as good, but virginity as better; PG 48, 533-96; cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology* (vol. 3): *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon*, Spectrum Publishers, Westminster, 1960, pp. 464-66.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *In Praise of Maximus*, 3-5; PG 51, 230-33; cf. T. P. HALTON, *The Human Couple in the Fathers*, pp. 339-41.



In the first part we have discussed the importance of symbolism in theology and liturgy. Since symbolism has given rise to various understandings of the Church's essence, identity and mission, the concept of symbolism is very important in Catholic theology today. In this way, theology depends heavily on symbols and images, and the theologians use them for a better understanding of the mysteries of faith. In this section, we have examined the symbolic language in the Bible and Syriac tradition, symbolic nature of the sacraments in general and the symbolization of the sacrament of marriage in particular. In the second section, we treated the biblical idea of the conjugal symbolism. The creation accounts show that the spousal union is instituted by God Himself. It is God Himself who created man and woman, and united them as one body. In this part, we examined the spousal union prefigured in the Old Testament and New Testament, Christ's attitude towards marriage, Christ-Church relation in Pauline vision, the symbolism of Christ as the Bridegroom and Church as the bride of Christ in the New Testament, conjugal symbolism of Christ and the Church expressed in the Malankara liturgy of marriage and so on.

The discussion on the theme 'spousal union between Christ and the Church' as a 'Great Mystery' shows that marriage is something 'higher' than marriage; and it replaces the natural by supernatural. So, Christian marriage which is meritorious in a state of grace, is elevated to a supernatural order as it signifies and participates in the 'Great Mystery'.

the two baptized persons is elevated to the dignity of a real sacrament by signifying and participating in the spousal love and nuptial mystery of Christ and the Church. In this sense, the sacramentality of marriage is understood in the terms of 'Great Mystery'. It makes also a relation between the sacramentality of the Church and the sacrament of matrimony. In the Pauline vision, the 'Great Mystery' has both the 'concealing' and 'revealing' aspects. This mystery has a 'concealing' aspect as it includes the hidden design of God. It has also the 'revealing' aspect in the sense that the hidden divine plan is revealed in a veiled manner in marriage, as it is oriented towards the 'paschal mystery'. For Paul, marriage is a 'revealed mystery' as it represents the 'Great Mystery' of Christ and the Church. Therefore, marriage is a sign that makes visible and operative the mystery hidden in God.

As exemplification of the Christ-Church relation which is very intimate, spouses also become 'One Flesh' in their marital life. "They shall be one flesh" (Mt 19:5-6). Paul connects the bridal union of Christ and the Church in Eph 5:31-32. The unity of 'two in one flesh' is not only biological but it has also a spiritual quality as marriage together involves the soul, mind, heart and will. In this sense, marital union affects the whole person. Thus, 'One flesh' means 'one life' and it creates a fuller life among them. They are two but 'one' at the same time - it is a duality with unity; and, being two they form one unity. The real marital life transforms the two into 'one flesh'. It is not a fusion of two individuals but they join their lives into a common project of sharing their journey toward God. The biblical 'one flesh' is eschatological as it realizes salvation. Marriage is more a mysterious union of two people as one body-person as it symbolizes the 'one flesh'



unity of Christ and the Church. The mutual love and service make also the spouses 'one flesh' in the image of Christ and the Church.

In the next part, we examined the indissoluble nature of the spousal union. The permanent nature of the spousal union is an important characteristic of the sacramental marriage. Since Christ-Church love is the fundamental basis and structure of every Christian marriage, the life-long commitment of the spouses is very important. We have also seen that like any other sacrament, the sacrament of marriage is also a sign that contains in itself and brings about that which it signifies. It is a sign and image of marriage between God and humanity and of a deeper union between Christ and the Church. Thus, the human and divine become 'one' in this sacrament. Thus, the sacramentality of marriage constitutes the intrinsic foundation of its indissolubility. Marriage is a 'lived' sacrament of life and love, as it re-lives the acts of the Creator. Christ, by teaching on marriage indicates its sacramental nature. Paul also, by referring marriage as a re-enactment of the union of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:21-33), indicates the sacramentality of marriage. Fathers, theologians and popes have extensively expressed their views on the goodness and sacramentality of marriage. We have discussed their opinions in this chapter in detail.

spouses to offer themselves to each other and to lead lives of emptying themselves for each other. Christ's relationship to the Church presents the eschatological nature and it involves salvation. He saves her (Eph 5:23c) by loving and dying for her (5:25b-27). In this sense, married love is also a covenanted love involving self-sacrifice. The next chapter particularly deals with the image of 'Christ as Bridegroom', His role as the Bridegroom for His bride and the christological dimension of marriage.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **'CHRIST AS THE BRIDEGROOM' IN THE MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE**

### **Introduction**

Malankara liturgy of marriage has many biblical and patristic images. One of the main images we find in the liturgy is that Christ is symbolized as the Bridegroom of the Church. This bridal image pictures Christ's presence in the world as that of the Bridegroom. As we have seen, the spousal symbolism is very important in the patristic literature and this has become common place in the liturgy also. The prayers and hymns of MLM repeatedly present the image of Christ as the eternal and righteous Bridegroom. The prayers indicate also that every marriage is a symbol and image of the spousal union and covenant between Christ the Bridegroom and Church the bride. The relation between Christ and the Church is manifested as 'Christ loves the Church as His bride'. Therefore, with the concept 'Christ as the Bridegroom', the relation between Christ and the Church is depicted as a personal and intimate union. The concept 'Christ as the Bridegroom' highlights the aspect of love as expressed in the relation between Christ and the Church. These ideas are often mentioned in the prayers of MLM. Marriage is a symbol of

how Christ loves the Church, i.e., He gave Himself up for her. In this way, when we call Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, it shows the strong and active relation that exists between Christ the Bridegroom and Church the bride. Their everlasting fullness and perfect unity which is the union of two in one is not dissolved by duality nor absolved by unity.<sup>1</sup> Through His passion and death, Christ proved His love towards her as a real Bridegroom. Through giving His body and blood as ring, He proved this closeness and inseparable relation with her.

In this chapter, we discuss some of the important patristic images reflected in MLM. Here, we are mainly concerned with the liturgical texts regarding the image of Christ as the Bridegroom and other patristic symbols around this image. We examine also the nuptial image 'Christ as Bridegroom' in Syriac Fathers and Syriac writings, and the christological dimension of marriage in the Malankara liturgy reflected under the image 'Christ as the Bridegroom'. The aim of this chapter is simply to prepare the reader to comprehend the nucleus of this image and its significance in the liturgy of marriage. Here, concentration is placed on the various patristic images seen in the liturgy and its christological connotation.

### **3.1. THE IMAGE 'CHRIST AS THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE CHURCH' (ܡܫܘܟܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܩܝܫܬܐ)**

The Malankara Liturgy of Marriage depicts Christ as the eternal and righteous Bridegroom not less than 16 times.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. N. BULGAKOV, *The Orthodox Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1988, pp. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Koodâsakramom*, pp. 47, 48, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 64, 70, 71, 77, 78, 81...



In the liturgy, every marriage is described as the covenant with Christ the Bridegroom who received the Church as His bride. In this eternal covenant, Christ the heavenly Bridegroom makes a permanent relation and union; and thus, Christ is the model of real marriage in this world. This union is the result of His eternal love for His bride, the Church. In MLM, we find the idea that Christ purified and separated the Church as His own by His precious blood. He gave His body and blood as the ring of this permanent covenant. As response, Church as the bride of Christ recognizes her Bridegroom as most beautiful, strong and adorable.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1.1. The Texts from the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage

The image 'Christ as the Bridegroom' is often expressed in many of the hymns and prayers of the Malankara liturgy of marriage. Some of the important passages are given below:

(1) In the prayer of *prômiûn* the images, Bridegroom (ܠܬܢܘܬܐ - *hatnô*) and bride (ܠܟܠܬܘܬܐ - *kalltô*)<sup>4</sup> are

<sup>3</sup> Cf. T. PAZHOOR, "ܠܘܘܒܐ" (Marriage), L. MOOLAVEETIL (ed.), ܕܡܘܠܐܘܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܠܐܘܘܬܐ (Sacraments in the Malankara Church), pp. 170-72. For more on the theme Christ as the Bridegroom and the Church as the bride, cf. H. ENGBERDING, "Die Kirche als Braut in der ostsyrichen Liturgie", *OCP* 3 (1937) 5-48; R. GRAFFIN, "Recherches sur le thème de l'Église: Épouse dans les liturgies et la littérature patristique de langue syriaque", *L'OrSyr* iii (1958) 307-16.

<sup>4</sup> To denote bride, there are two words used in different senses: *mkîrtô* and *kalltô*. The word *mkîrtô* (root *mkar*) has a commercial significance. It

well expressed. "The heavenly Bridegroom who has chosen for Himself the Church (قَطَا لَه دَبَلَا) (سَلَا سَلَا), the daughter of the Gentiles, and purified her through His innocent blood from filth and defilement; to Him, who betrothed to Himself the earthly Church and became for her the betrothed One..."<sup>5</sup> Here, this passage indicates that Christ, the Bridegroom purified and separated the Church, His bride as His own.

- (2) About the betrothal of Christ the Bridegroom with the holy Church, we find the text as follows: "when the heavenly Bridegroom (سَلَا سَلَا) betrothed Himself to the holy and faithful Church, He called Simon and John and entrusted and gave the Church to both of them".<sup>6</sup>
- (3) Christ the Bridegroom makes the covenant with the Church "May the exalted One who came down on Mount Sinai to make a covenant with the bride whom He brought out of Egypt".<sup>7</sup>
- (4) Christ the Bridegroom consoles her and gives courage: "Do not be afraid, O faithful Church and let not your heart be disturbed".<sup>8</sup>
- (5) Christ the Bridegroom keeps her always safe and promises His eternal presence to her. The Church says: "He promised me 'I am with you till the end of the world'".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> MLM 47; ET 238; ST 33.

<sup>6</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>7</sup> MLM 78; ET 254; ST 61.

<sup>8</sup> MLM 50; ET 240; ST 37.

<sup>9</sup> MLM 56; ET 243; ST 42.



- (6) In the *etro*, Christ is again pictured as the true and righteous Bridegroom: "O true and righteous Bridegroom (ܡܘܠܘܢܐ ܘܥܕܘܢܐ) to whom the souls of virgins and pure ones are betrothed ...".<sup>10</sup>
- (7) In another prayer of *etro*, Christ is depicted as the real and true Bridegroom. "O real and true Bridegroom (ܡܘܠܘܢܐ ܘܥܕܘܢܐ) who was invited for the marriage feast at Cana and who transformed water into wine ...".<sup>11</sup>
- (8) The priest prays for God's blessings to the newly wedded spouses: "May Christ the heavenly Bridegroom (ܡܘܠܘܢܐ ܘܥܕܘܢܐ) seal your marriage and as He rejoices in the Church may you also rejoice in each other".<sup>12</sup>
- (9) In *sûgîô*, the Church adores her Bridegroom, "I adore the Bridegroom who came and betrothed me (ܡܘܠܘܢܐ ܘܥܕܘܢܐ) (ܐܢܐ ܘܥܕܘܢܐ)".<sup>13</sup>

This image 'Christ as the Bridegroom', is one of the favourite titles by which the early Syriac Fathers and ascetics expressed their passionate attachment to Christ.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this patristic image is repeatedly used also in other Malankara liturgical prayers which are pregnant with ecclesiological doctrine.

<sup>10</sup> MLM 52; ET 241; ST 37.

<sup>11</sup> MLM 70; ET 249; ST 52.

<sup>12</sup> MLM 77; ET 254; ST 59.

<sup>13</sup> MLM 55; ET 242; ST 42.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 132.

### 3.1.2. ‘Christ as the Bridegroom’ in *Pênqîto* and other Common Prayers of the Syro-Malankara Liturgy

The image ‘Christ as Bridegroom’ is seen not only in the marriage service, but this idea is expressed also in many other prayers and hymns of the liturgy. We find many references to this image in the various liturgical services of different occasions. Some of the main texts which consist of this image, are mentioned below:

(1) In *Pênqîto*<sup>15</sup>, especially in the hymns of the Consecration of the Church *qûdôs i'dtô* (ܩܘܕܘܫܐ ܝܕܬܐ) and of the *hûdôs i'dtô* (ܠܡܘܫܐ ܝܕܬܐ), the image ‘Christ as the Bridegroom’ is often repeated. In the night vigil prayer of the feast of the Consecration of the Church, we find the following prayer in its *eniyônô* and hymn:

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<sup>15</sup> *Pênqîto* = Festal breviaries and prayer services of the churches of the Antiochene Rite, for Sundays and feast days throughout the year. *Pênqîto* is a Syriac word, means book, but here it designates the books of the prayers of the Church. Only two editions are available now: (1) The Catholic edition which bears a latin title *Breviarum Iuxta Ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenaе* (7 vols.), published by Ignatius Benham Benni, Patriarch of the Syrian Church of Antioch, Mosul from 1886-1896; (2) The Orthodox edition published in 1962-63 by the late Catholicos Baselios Geevarghese II at Julius Press, Pampakuda, India (only 3 vols.). Both *qûdôs edtô* and *hûdôs edtô* are great Feasts in the West Syrian liturgical tradition. The liturgical year begins with the Sunday of *qûdôs edtô* which is celebrated as the feast of the Consecration of the Church and the next Sunday (*hûdôs edtô*) comes after *qûdôs edtô* is celebrated as the feast of the Dedication of the Church. Therefore, all the prayers and hymns recited on these feast days are based on the theme of the Church.



Heavenly Bridegroom, you betrothed the holy Church...  
 Glorious and holy Bridegroom who exalted your Church  
 in the creation...  
 She is adorned by You, her true Bridegroom...  
 Blessed are you, Church of true believers,  
 spouse of the heavenly Bridegroom .....  
 The Bridegroom has prepared a wedding feast ....  
 And called the guests, his people, to make merry with  
 him.  
 The heavenly Bridegroom has made a feast for his  
 guests...  
 Behold, the nations are saved by his blood.  
 The Church his Bride takes her delight in it, ....  
 Glory to the Son of God who espoused the Holy Church.  
 He himself gave her his innocent blood as dowry ....  
 Who betrothed the Church and adorned her with all  
 beauty.<sup>16</sup>

Here, we find the important themes such as Christ as  
 the heavenly Bridegroom of the Church, He bought her by  
 His precious blood which was given as His dowry, He prepared  
 a wedding feast and called the guests to attend the wedding  
 feast and so on. This same theme is expressed also in the  
*prómiún-sêdró* of *húdôs edtó*: "Praise to the heavenly  
 Bridegroom who from a people stained with sin chose for  
 Himself a Church, and purified her and made her his holy

<sup>16</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*,  
*(Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum)*, vol. 2, ed. by  
 I. G. SELHOT, Typis Fratrum Praedicatorum, Mosul, Iraq, 1886, pp. 7-  
 10; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, *The  
 Crown of the Year – Part One*, Kurisumala Ashram Publications, Vagamon,  
 India, 1982, pp. 9-12; G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition",  
*SCC-6*, SEERI, Kottayam, India, pp. 45-46.

bride and summoned the prophets and apostles, and called them to His marriage feast and made for her a glorious banquet”.<sup>17</sup> Here, Christ is pictured as the heavenly Bridegroom who betrothed the daughter of the Gentiles. He washed and purified her to make His bride and invited all to His wedding banquet. This theme is often repeated in the different *eniyônô*, *prômiûn-sêdrô*, *bô ’ûtô* and so on.<sup>18</sup> Again in the evening prayer of *hûdôs edtô*, we find the references that Christ the Bridegroom descended to take the Church as His bride, and finally He saved her with His own blood. The following text shows the strong intimacy between them:

In His love Christ descended humbling Himself,  
and He took the Church for His bride  
who now sings praise to him.....

Christ who humbled Yourself for our salvation  
And took the Church for your bride,

And by means of your blood saved her from destruction.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-’idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 29; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-’idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, pp. 34-41; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, pp. 26-31; *The Prômiûn for the Pênqitô Office* (from the Sunday of *qûdôs edtô* till the Sunday of *ânîdê* i.e commemoration of the dead) used by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christians, trans. from Syriac into Malayalam by Moron Baselios Ougen I, Orthodox Church Book House, Kottayam, India, 1986 (third edition), pp. 1, 3, 4, 10-11, 15, 16-17, 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-’idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 28; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, pp. 18-19.



(2) In the liturgical text of the Feast of *Danahô* (Baptism of our Lord) also, Christ is pictured as the Bridegroom who invites all to His banquet. Here, we find also the indication of the betrothal of Christ and the Church His bride. After the betrothal that took place at Jordan, the Bridegroom invites all to attend the banquet and share this great joy. All these themes are mentioned in the following prayers: "You choose the Church for your bride in the midst of the water and purify her defilement, and call the peoples and nations for your wedding feast and You cause Yourself to be baptized and you become her Bridegroom in purity".<sup>20</sup> In the service of the Hosanna, Christ is again referred to as the Bridegroom: "The Holy Church proclaims, her Bridegroom who is the Lord and Son of David, comes on a colt".<sup>21</sup> In the *eniyônô*, *prômiûn-sêdrô* and *kukliôn* of the *vâdê dalmînô* service, Christ is pictured as the Bridegroom.<sup>22</sup>

(3) The hymns of *Šhîmô*: The theme 'Christ as the Bridegroom' is expressed in its different hymns.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the

<sup>20</sup> Cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 19; cf. *The Text of the Liturgical Feasts of the Malankara Catholic Church* (മലങ്കര കത്തോലിക്കാ സഭയുടെ ആരാധനക്രമം: ചെറു താളുകൾ), St. Mary's Press, Trivandrum, India, 2003, p. 92. Here, we find that Christ, consecrated His Church through the living Spirit. At Jordan, He purified her from the filth and dirty... and gave her eternal life.

<sup>21</sup> *The Text of the Feasts of the Liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church*, p. 152. This idea is again expressed in the hymn for the procession of Hosanna (p. 163).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *The Text of the Liturgical Feasts of the Malankara Catholic Church*; pp. 168-72. In the Antiochene tradition, *vâdê dalmînô* service is made in the evening after the Sunday of Hosanna. Again, in the *botê d-hâsô*, we find that Christ the true Bridegroom invites all for His banquet; cf. the same text p. 173.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Šhîmô* (Divine Office for the week Days in the Syro-Malankara Church) pp. 63, 82, 92, 111, 131, 233, 303, 399, 243, 246.





Christ put on precious things that are from the water: on her hand the living body, and in her ears the promises".<sup>26</sup> Here, there is a clear indication that Christ betrothed her at His baptism, and as a sign of His betrothal, He put His rings on her fingers. "To Jordan I journeyed after Him (ܠܗܘܪܕܢ ܐܬܪܝܢܝܘܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ), and among the assemblies I looked for Him".<sup>27</sup> This theme is also mentioned in the Feast of *Danahô* service: "Church of true believers sing praise to the heavenly Bridegroom who betrothed you in the river".<sup>28</sup> Here, all these liturgical passages make an allusion that the betrothal between Christ and the Church takes place at the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan through the mediation of John. Christ's baptism in the Jordan is symbolized as the Church's bridal bath in which she is purified and made her as His own. Here, the baptismal bath becomes the Church's bridal bath. Thus, through the water and cross, she became His bride.<sup>29</sup> In this way, Christ's baptism at Jordan and His death on the cross are intimately related. Ephrem finds the betrothal of Christ the Bridegroom to the Church taking place at Jordan.<sup>30</sup> Ephrem speaks in the *Diatessaron Commentary* as follows: "Eleazer

<sup>26</sup> EPHREM, *HEp.* 8; CSCO 168-169/Scr.Syr. 156-157, pp. 31-32; cf. BEGGIANI S. J., *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality: the Syriac Tradition*, p. 82.

<sup>27</sup> MLM 54; ET 243; ST 43.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, *The Crown of the Year – Part One*, p. 483.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, "E Latere Christi", A. R. BATLOGG, et. al. (eds.) *Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, Band 3, pp. 18-19; 38; cf. O. CASEL, "Die Taufe als Brautbad der Kirche", *JLW* 5 (1925) 144-47.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *HVirg.* 5:9, CSCO 223-24/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 19; *HResur.* 3:2-5, CSCO 248/Scr.Syr. 108, pp. 85-86; 68-69; *HCrucif.* 1:1-4, CSCO 248/Scr.Syr. 108, pp. 42-43; 34-35; cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh: An Exegetical-theological Study on the*

(for Isaac) with Rebecca, Jacob with Rachel, and Moses with Zipporah: All these were types of our Lord who espoused His Church at his baptism in the Jordan”.<sup>31</sup> For Ephrem, Christ’s betrothal with the Church at His baptism is an anticipatory symbol of His death on Calvary. In the baptismal waters, Christ purified and washed away her sinfulness and filth, made her holy and gave her a new life. “It is well-known in the old days the necessity that the couples had to take a bath before their marriage. And this was a holy purification”.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.2.2. Christ the Bridegroom Married the Church on the Cross

Christ’s betrothal of the Church at the Jordan was an anticipation of His death on the Cross at Calvary where he married the Church. This theme is also expressed in MLM:

(1) “The beautiful one who on the Cross married me (رُفِيفًا خَدِ الْاَصْحَابِ)”.<sup>33</sup>

(2) The idea of marriage is seen in another passage also. “When the heavenly Bridegroom married the Church (لَحَبِ الْجَلِ) (رُفِيفًا خَدِ الْاَصْحَابِ)”.<sup>34</sup> The theme of Christ’s marriage with the Church on the cross is mentioned in the evening prayer of the *qûdôs edtô* in the following way: “Holy Church, rejoice and exult on the day of your renovation, chant and sing a new praise with all solemnity. And give thanks to the Bridegroom

<sup>31</sup> *EcArm.* 3, 17; CSCO 137; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 135. Here, there is an implicit identification of the Gentiles with the Church.

<sup>32</sup> O. CASEL, “Die Taufe als Brautbad der Kirche”, *JLW* 5 (1925) 144.

<sup>33</sup> MLM 58; ET 244; ST 44.

<sup>34</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.



who has espoused you on the cross".<sup>35</sup> Christ, through the baptismal water of river Jordan, not only purified the Church but also made her holy so that she might be a worthy partner for Him. The baptism at the Jordan was a preparation to marry the Church on the cross. It reminds us of the Oriental practice of a bridal bath before marriage in which the nuptial union of the bride with the Bridegroom is preceded. Christ also cleansed her by washing in the baptismal water at Jordan (Eph 5:26). Thus, before marrying her, He sanctified and made her holy. In Ez 16:8-9, we find that God bathed Israel with water, washed and anointed her with oil before He entered into a covenant with her. It also reminds us of the Oriental custom of betrothal and marriage at two different stages. This tradition of the betrothal and marriage at two stages is still kept in the Malankara tradition.

It is on the cross that we find the perfect union between Christ and His Church. Consequently, marriage receives a particular meaning with regard to Christ's cross, as it expresses a singular union between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church His bride. It highlights the fact that He was ready to die for His bride, and His nuptial consent was one of dying for her (Mt 16:21, 20:17-19). It is within the context of the Last Supper that Christ expressed His consent to die. Christ the Bridegroom washes the feet of the friends before events of the cross. The washing of the feet is a symbol of the baptismal washing and the washing of His spouse the Church. At the supper-table, we find the nuptial meaning in giving up

<sup>35</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye (Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum)*, vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 5; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 6.

His Body and Blood for His beloved spouse as the faithful Bridegroom. "This is my Body which is for you" (Lk 22:19, I Cor 11:24-25). Thus, the Church as a spouse of Christ, has the responsibility to show the world the unity she receives by union with God in Christ.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, in the mystery of the Bridegroom and the bride, two meanings come together: firstly, the eschatological meaning of human espousals - that union of God with His people which the Old Testament expressed by the image of marriage, and secondly, in the mystery of God's love, this image becomes reality because Christ espouses fallen humanity, which He raises up by the cross. It is in this marriage of blood that His sonship becomes ours. Thus, we are made sons with the Son, in the Son.<sup>37</sup> Christ's self-immolation on the cross of Calvary shows His readiness to die for His bride, by cleansing and perfecting her by His death. For Ephrem, this is a symbol of Christ's perfect love for the Church. He says, "Christ Himself left His Father on high and His mother below, and died for His Church, so that by His death He might give life to the Church which He loved, and might raise her up and bring her to that kingdom of His".<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2.3. Christ's Blood as the Dowry to the Church

There exists the custom of giving dowry for the bride to marry in the Oriental traditions. The father or the bridegroom

<sup>36</sup> Cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. POWELL, *The Mystery of the Church*, p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> EPHREM, *Arm.* III, p. 150. 22-29; tr. p. 53; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.138. Here, we find the perfect union of Christ and the Church on the cross. Marriage of Christ and His Church is a frequent theme in Ephrem. It is expressed in his various hymns; cf. *HFid.* 14:6; *CSCO*154-155/*Scr.Syr.* 73-74, p. 62, 86; *HVirg.* 19:2; *CSCO* 223-224/*Scr.Syr.* 94-95, p. 64.



himself fixes a dowry for the bride and it is given to the father of the bride to get her as his own. Here, Christ the Bridegroom, also gives His dowry to the Church by means of His Blood that is shed from His side. Christ in this manner pays the dowry to the bride itself, not to the Father, and the dowry paid by Christ for His bride is His own body and blood. It is on the cross that Christ married the Church and gave His dowry in His own blood. This dowry of Christ is the giving of Himself, a complete offering and dedication to the Church His bride. Christ's dowry to His bride is imperishable and incorruptible.

It is in the cross and His blood, the gift of the Bridegroom to His spouse in its fullness is manifested (Eph 5:25-27; 32). It reveals specificity and uniqueness of the love of Christ for His bride. Therefore, this dowry is something unique and expresses the strong relation and the inner union between them. It is through this precious blood that flowed from His side that He wrote the marriage document. In a hymn used in MLM, it is said that "the Church which is bought by His precious blood (ܕܘܚܒܘܗܐ ܡܡܢܐ)"<sup>39</sup> Again, we find the idea that the Church is blessed with the blood of her Bridegroom: "How beautiful you are, O Daughter of the Gentiles, ...your pure mouth which is sprinkled with the blood of the Son of God (ܕܘܚܒܘܗܐ ܘܚܢܐ ܕܢܘܪܐ)"<sup>40</sup> In the last hymn of the marriage service, we find the same idea of Christ's dowry: "In Your cross You sealed my dowry ... (ܕܘܚܒܘܗܐ ܡܡܢܐ ܕܘܚܒܘܗܐ ܡܡܢܐ)"<sup>41</sup> So, all these prayers and hymns express the idea that Christ gave His blood to the Church as His dowry. In the East Syrian marriage liturgy also, we find the same idea of Christ giving His dowry to the Church in His

<sup>39</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>40</sup> MLM 67; ET 249; ST 51.

<sup>41</sup> MLM 80; ET 255; ST 61.



blood. It is expressed in a beautiful chant made during the crowning of the spouses: "give thanks, O Church, the queen, to the Son of the King who has affianced you, .... and given you as a dowry the blood which He made flow from His side ....".<sup>42</sup>

The hidden mystery present in the Cross gives marriage a new meaning. By Christ's blood on the Cross, God reconciled all things to Himself (Col 1:20). Thus, He has established peace and unity among all so that all become one body (Eph 2:14-18). The cross is more than suffering and humiliation, but an elevation to glory. It is on the cross that Christ founds His Church by 'giving the spirit' (Jn 19:30), and by permitting blood and water to flow from His side (Jn 19:34). Thus, the cross and His blood have become the living sign of salvation; the tree of the cross has become the 'tree of life' (Rev 22:2, 19).<sup>43</sup> In the mystery of the cross, Christ brings about the revelation of God's love for His unfaithful bride (the people of Israel) and sanctifies the unfaithful into a chaste bride to dispose her to His covenant (Eph 5:25-27). It is in His blood,

<sup>42</sup> *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum, Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, vol. III, P. BEDJAN (ed.), S. Congregationem, 'Pro Ecclesia Orientali', Rome, 1938, p. 314; P. YOUSIF, "The Sacrament of Marriage in the Tradition of the Church of the East", a Paper presented at the *Fifth Pro Oriente Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Churches of the Syriac Tradition: 'sacraments in the Syriac Tradition- Part II'*, 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2002, Vienna, p. 9; cf. also J. VELLIAN, "The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Liturgy", *SL* 11-12 (1976) 191. Here, the dowry which Christ gave is His life itself. With His blood, He confirmed His betrothal.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. X. LEON-DUFOUR (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 84. The theology of the *kenosis* on the cross expresses Christ's intention to be poor to make us rich. The cross is seen as the cosmic mystery, and it is on the cross, the Creator of the world died. In the cosmic mystery of the cross, Christ embraced the world. Thus, Golgotha becomes the centre of the cosmos. On this cross, Christ recapitulated the universe in Himself; cf. Irenaeus, *Contra haereses* v, 18,3; PG 7, 1200; Leo the Great, *Sermo* 59,7; PL 54, 431; cf. RAHNER H., *Miti Greci nell'interpretazione cristiana*, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 1980, pp. 67-71.



Christ seals His new covenant. Thus, Christ's blood shed on the cross is symbolized as His dowry for His bride, the Church. That is why, MLM also mentions the idea that Christ sealed His dowry on His cross.

The themes that Christ gave the dowry in His blood and He bought the Church with His precious blood are expressed also in other liturgical prayers besides the marriage service. In *Pênqîto*, this theme is often repeated in many prayers of the feasts. In the *eniyônô* of *hûdôs edtô* we find, "O Church, chant the glory of the king who has chosen you for His bride and who wrote the deed of your dowry with His blood ... and He is your Lord, he who saves you by His cross".<sup>44</sup> In the *Têksô d'kurbô*<sup>45</sup>, especially in its *prômiûn-sêdrô*, we find the same themes such as Christ bought the Church with His blood on the cross. Again we find that by His blood, He saved the Church and expiated our sins.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2.3.1. Christ Saves the Church with His Innocent Blood

The MLM embodies another important theme that Christ washes and purifies His bride with His innocent blood. It is expressed in the *prômiûn* of MLM: "The heavenly Bridegroom ... purified her through His innocent blood from all filth and defilement .. (حَبِّصَهُ زَكَاةً مَعَ صَلَواتِهِ مَحْضَةً مَحْضَةً وَسَلًا وَجْهًا)".<sup>47</sup> Here, there is an indication of the baptismal water

<sup>44</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 28; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Têksô d'kurbô* (The Order of the Holy Qurbano), pp. 277, 283, 285, 290, 300, 302, 306.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Têksô d'kurbô*, pp. 278, 283, 289, 290, 291, 293, 299, 310, 311.

<sup>47</sup> MLM 47; ET 238; ST 33.



through which one is washed and purified and then admitted as the member in the Church. Here, Church is washed, purified and saved by Christ's innocent blood also. Thus, she is made holy and a worthy partner to the Bridegroom.

The New Testament uses the image of Christ's Blood to speak about its saving meaning. We find His blood as the purchase price and means of redemption (Eph 1:7; Heb 9:12), means of expiation (Rom 3:25), forgiveness (Eph 1:7), cleansing (Heb 9:14, 1 Jn 1:7), purification and deliverance (1 Pet 1:2), and sanctifying (Heb 13:12). Again through His blood, God brings together those who were away (Eph 2:13) and reconciles everyone (Col 1:20) to God. All these biblical passages indicate the saving meaning of Christ's blood. However, the blood which is poured out is His life itself because it was 'shed' in His sacrifice, and 'shed' for others (Lk 22:20). Christ's blood restores solidarity to the people and their union with God. The sharing in Christ's blood in the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:16) shows its ecclesial dimension.<sup>48</sup>

Ephrem also finds atoning power in Christ's blood: "*there came forth blood and water ... the rib of Adam was his wife, and the blood of our Lord, life. The olive is the symbol of Christ, for from him spring milk, water and oil; milk for babes, water for young men and oil for the sick. Likewise the 'Olive' gave these also, water and blood, in his death, and gave oil in (or by) his death*".<sup>49</sup> Ephrem here says that we enter

<sup>48</sup> Cf. G. OSTDIEK, "The Blood of Christ", *The New Dictionary of Theology*, J. A. KOMONCHAK et. al. (eds.), Michael Glazier, Wilmington, Delaware, 1989, pp. 143-44.

<sup>49</sup> *EC Syr.* 21,11; *Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant (Texte Syriaque)* LÉLOIR L. (ed.), Chester Beatty Monographs 8, Dublin, 1963, p. 214-15, *EcArm.* p. 318, cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.125.



into paradise through Christ's side: "And he came and took him a body, that was wounded, that by the opening of his side he might open a way into paradise".<sup>50</sup> Here, Ephrem is of the opinion that the cross and blood became the cause of Life: "And as one tree became the cause of death so another tree has become the cause of Life; for through the one tree death conquered, through the other Life shines forth".<sup>51</sup>

#### 3.2.4. Christ's Body and Blood as the Ring to the Church

Another interesting symbolism that occurs in MLM is that Christ's body and blood are given to the Church as His ring. Fathers apply the symbol of ring as the one representing the union between Christ and the Church. "This is the ring, through which the Holy Church was married to her heavenly Bridegroom and she has received the body and blood of Christ for forgiveness of sins".<sup>52</sup> It shows that Christ has given fully to herself by giving His body and blood as the ring. The following references in MLM point out this fact:

(1) "You granted the Church in purity the ring which is Your innocent body and blood... (لَهُ حَمَلًا قَدِيمًا هَوَّصًا) (لَهُ حَمَلًا)".<sup>53</sup> Here, Christ's body and blood are referred to the ring for His bride, the Church.

<sup>50</sup> *HNat.* 8,4; *CSCO* 186/Syr. 82, p. 59; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.126.

<sup>51</sup> *HEccl.* 49,8; *CSCO* 198/Syr. 84, p. 126; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.127.

<sup>52</sup> H. DENZINGER, *Ritus Orientalium* II, Tomus Primus, Typis et Sumptibus Stahelianis, Würzburg, 1863, p. 428. In the *Ordo Communionis Infirmorum*, we find the prayer for the forgiveness of sins: "Nunc per sanctam corpus tuum et sanguinem libera eum a transgressionibus peccatorum et mortis, et sanctifica eum per gratiam tuam, ut gustando tuo salutifero corpore et sanguine, dignus efficiatur vitae aeternae" (p. 428).

<sup>53</sup> MLM 48; ET 239; ST 35.

(2) In the hymn, we find again this theme, "And rings He put on my fingers, His holy body and blood (هَوِّدَهُ فَبِيْمَا (هَدَمَلَا مَعْدَدَ حَرَحَلَا فَيْنِهْ)".<sup>54</sup> The Church also accepts and receives His body and blood as the ring of their union.

(3) In the *çniyônô*, this theme is very clear that the Church received Christ's body and blood as the ring for their sign of indissoluble union, "The holy Church was betrothed to Christ with the ring and she received His holy body and blood (لَوَّ حَبَالًا فَبِيْمَا لَخَفَسَا هَمَحَلَا فَيْنِهْ هَوِّدَهُ فَبِيْمَا (حَدَحَلَا أَلَا مَحَلَا)".<sup>55</sup>

Jacob of Serugh also symbolizes Christ's blood on Golgotha as the ring of His marriage with the Church. He says that the royal ring of the King's Son was replaced by His own blood: "The King's Son made a marriage feast in blood on Golgotha. There the Daughter of day was betrothed to him, to be his, and the royal ring was beaten out in the nails of his hands; with his holy blood was the betrothal made".<sup>56</sup>

### 3.2.5. Christ the Bridegroom Perfects the Church by His Presence

For MLM Christ perfects the Church by His everlasting presence. Christ the Bridegroom wants to perfect His bride by living together, and promises her of His presence always. This theme is expressed in MLM in the following way: "Do not be afraid, O faithful Church and let not your heart be disturbed. I do not exchange you with another ... And if at the end of time heaven and earth are dissolved, you should not be afraid".<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> MLM 56; ET 243; ST 42.

<sup>55</sup> MLM 43; ET 236; ST 31.

<sup>56</sup> BEGGIANI S. J., *Early Syriac Theology*, University Press of America, Boston, 1983, p. 56; cf. also S. BROCK, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", *Sobornost*, Series 7, No. 6 (1978) 463-67.

<sup>57</sup> MLM 47-48; ET 240; ST 37.



We find the same theme in the night vigil prayer of the *hūdōs çātō*: “Blessed are you, Church of believers, the Bridegroom who espoused you dies not. He is with you until the end of the world, as He promised”.<sup>58</sup> The nuptial meaning is clear in the following words, “And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (Jn 14:3). Here ‘you’ is addressed to the Church. The Bridegroom desires that His spouse should be always with Him. This nuptial union of Christ and His Church has an eschatological goal, the union in heaven, i.e. ‘my Father’s house’ where a place has been prepared for His beloved spouse.<sup>59</sup> He perfects and completes His nuptial union through His living together with the Church forever. The historical life of Christ and the historical life of the Church are structurally and permanently united. By living together, they form a single life, the one symbolic and exemplary, the other symbolized and real. Origen says, “Christ, so to speak, ‘adheres’ to His spouse, who has fallen (from heaven) to this (earth), and here the two have become (one) in a single flesh, for it is for her sake that He also has become flesh .... And they are no longer two (beings) but now one flesh ...”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Pengito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-‘idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye, (Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum)*, vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 34; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined ....: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>60</sup> ORIGEN, *Comment. in Matthaeum*; PG, 13, 1229. Origen says that the mutual consent and union make them one. “...et ubienae tandem viri

### 3.2.6. Christ Prepares the Bridal Chamber (ܘܒܝܬܐ ܕܘܢܘܐ) in Heaven

The Hebrew word *huppah* which means bridal chamber is equivalent to the Syriac word ܘܒܝܬܐ ܕܘܢܘܐ (*bêth gnûnô*) in which the bride was brought in procession for the marital union. Aphrahat, in his *Demonstrations*, uses several times the term *gnûnô*.<sup>61</sup> The liturgical prayers also express the idea that Christ the Bridegroom prepares for the Church, His bride a bridal chamber (*gnûnô*) in heaven. In the opening prayer of the second service of MLM, we pray for making us worthy of entering into that chamber, "Make us worthy, O Lord God, of that unending wedding and incorruptible bridal chamber".<sup>62</sup> In the *etrô* the priest prays for the couple to make them happy in the bridal chamber. "Make them joyful in Your spiritual bridal chamber (ܘܒܝܬܐ ܕܘܢܘܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ)".<sup>63</sup> In another hymn also we find the same idea: "And you made my bridal chamber in heaven (ܘܒܝܬܐ ܕܘܢܘܐ ܕܘܫܘܒܐ) and invited me that I may be Yours".<sup>64</sup> Again, the Church is promised to have a bridal chamber always with Him "Your bridegroom has established your chamber (ܘܒܝܬܐ ܕܘܢܘܐ) in the highest heavens, O Church".<sup>65</sup> The symbolism of the entry into the bridal chamber is applied to Christ's leading the Church to the heavenly, spiritual and eternal Jerusalem. Thus, the references to the bridal chamber and the heavenly banquet which we find in the Malankara liturgy of

<sup>61</sup> Cf. APHRAHAT, *Dem.* 6:1; 7:25; 9:9; 14:16, 38; 22; *PS*, pars prima, pp. 240-53; 355-56; 428-29; 609-13; 677-81; 1004-08.

<sup>62</sup> MLM 59; ET 245; ST 46.

<sup>63</sup> MLM 70; ET 249; ST 52.

<sup>64</sup> MLM 78; ET 255; ST 61.

<sup>65</sup> MLM 64; ET 247; ST 47.



marriage show the eschatological dimension of the Church. The prayers and hymns of MLM point out that the Church is looking forward to fulfilment, and prays to make all worthy of this heavenly banquet.

The Church in the New Testament is also seen in an eschatological perspective in its perfection in heaven and its growth in this earth itself. In the New Testament, marriage is depicted as a means of revelation of the final glorification in heaven where Christ celebrates the wedding with those who followed Him. Many of Christ's parables and statements refer to it. The wedding in Cana is seen as an earthly image of the beginning of the messianic wedding. Christian marriage is presented as a pre-figuration of the heavenly wedding in which the love will be perfectly fulfilled. The invitation to the Kingdom is described in terms of a wedding in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 22:1-13). The earthly marital love of the spouses leads to the heavenly banquet. Christ's Invitation to this banquet is also expressed in MLM:

- (1) In the prayer of *prômiûn*, we find, "Blessed be the Lord God, who has called all the Gentiles and nations, all the Prophets and Apostles and all the Tribes, to the banquet of His Church (حَنَمِرْ هَهُ صَنِمَا وَمِنَا لِحَمَمَأَلَاهَا وَحَبَأَاهَا)".<sup>66</sup>
- (2) The priest prays for the couple so that they may enter in this heavenly banquet of eternal rejoicing: "Adorn them variously in this passing banquet and make them reach Your heavenly banquet, in which the vigilant ones and the angels eternally rejoice".<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> MLM 47; ET 238; ST 33.

<sup>67</sup> MLM 49; ET 239; ST 36.

- (3) In the *sûgîto*, we find the words of the Church who is invited for His banquet, "When I awoke from my sleep they told me that the Bridegroom had invited me to His banquet".<sup>68</sup>
- (4) Again we find that the Church is filled with happiness on this great invitation from her Bridegroom. She says, "My Lord and God prepared a banquet for me (صَدَقَ اللهُ بِحَبْرٍ دَاوُدَ)، cries the faithful Church".<sup>69</sup>

Many liturgical prayers refer to the theme of the feast which Christ has prepared for His bride. Some of them are the following: "By the feast which He has prepared for you gives joy to the earth and the heavens".<sup>70</sup> Again we find a similar prayer, "Christ the heavenly Bridegroom makes a magnificent banquet for the Church and introduces His bride into the feast on high. He invites all nations to the marriage-feast".<sup>71</sup> All these prayers express the idea that Christ prepares a bridal chamber and festal banquet, and He invites all for this celebration. The bridal chamber is a delightful place in heaven. The Church represents the Heavenly bridal chamber, and the Eucharistic banquet is the foretaste of the wedding banquet of the Kingdom.<sup>72</sup> He gave His Body and Blood as spiritual food

<sup>68</sup> MLM 57; ET 243; ST 43.

<sup>69</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>70</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 5; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, pp. 14-15; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p.14.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 273.



and drink as a token of His love for the Bride, and as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet which she has been promised by her Bridegroom. Ephrem mentions about the wedding feast: "Delighted the preachers, through whom the guests were to be instructed and to come to the wedding-feast".<sup>73</sup> Ephrem, again in his hymn on the wedding feast at Cana, makes references to bridal chamber and wedding banquet: "The soul is your bride, the body your bridal chamber, your guests are the senses and the thoughts. And if a single body is a wedding feast for you, how great is your banquet for the whole church".<sup>74</sup> Ephrem, sees the wedding-feast as the Holy Church: "see, you are reclining at the wedding-feast which is Holy Church, and you are eating the living body and drinking His pure blood".<sup>75</sup> However, "to the Oriental believer, the detailed and imaginative description of the espousal, wedding, bridal chamber and wedding banquet is very appealing and impressive, since it is based on local and biblical customs. But the liturgy leads the worshipper from the table of the wedding banquet to the table in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the completion of the feast on earth".<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> EPHREM, *HParad.* 11; CSCO 174-175/Scr.Syr. 78-79, p. 46; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 261.

<sup>74</sup> *HFid*, 14, 5; CSCO 154/155; Scr.Syr. 73/74, pp.62; 46-47; cf. S. BROCK, "World and Sacrament in the Writings of the Syrian Fathers", *Sobornost*, vol. 6, no. 10 (1974) 690.

<sup>75</sup> *SERMONES*, vol. 3, E. BECK (ed.), 4, 353-56; CSCO 320-21/Scr.Syr. 138-39, p. 42. This theme is very close to Aphrahat's theme of marriage-chamber and wedding-feast.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. J. VELLIAN, "The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Liturgy", *SL* 11-12 (1976) 193.



### 3.2.7. Christ as the Great Sun (ܥܘܨܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)

Christ the Bridegroom as the great Sun is another important patristic theme expressed in MLM. This image expresses the role of Christ as the Sun to enlighten His Church with His light. In this sense, Christ is occasionally pictured as the Sun (*šemšo*) in the Malankara liturgy: The Church says, "The Bridegroom is like the Sun... (ܥܘܨܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)".<sup>77</sup> We find again, the "on the venerable wood of the cross, O great Sun of Justice (ܥܘܨܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ) ...".<sup>78</sup> The Church says, "Your splendour is brighter than the Sun (ܥܘܨܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)".<sup>79</sup>

Besides the marriage liturgy, in other liturgical prayers of the Malankara Church, we find some references to Christ as the Sun. In *Pênqîtô*, Christ is often imaged as the Sun of justice who came to the world to remove the darkness and stain from the creatures. "Church is adorned with all spiritual beauty, with glorious royal robe of faith and with the spiritual and heavenly table of the blood of the Lamb without stain or blemish and with the Sun of Righteousness, Christ her Bridegroom".<sup>80</sup> In the night prayer of the *yaldô* (Christmas) service, it is mentioned that the Sun who was filled with splendour of the light came to the world as a man to visit the

<sup>77</sup> MLM 56; ET 243; ST 42-43.

<sup>78</sup> MLM 73; ET 252; ST 57.

<sup>79</sup> MLM 79; ET 255; ST 62.

<sup>80</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 3; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, p. 3; cf. also *The Prômiûn for the Pênqîtô Office* (from the Sunday of *qudôs êdtô* till the Sunday of *ânidê* i.e. commemoration of the dead), pp. 6, 37, 65, 69, 82, 89, 115, 120, 127, 130, 135, 140, 144, 153, 177, 188, 192, 198, 208, 234 etc.



human race.<sup>81</sup> Again, in the *sêdrô* we find the prayer, “You who are the Light rose from the womb like a Sun and with Your marvellous rising, fully illuminated all creatures”.<sup>82</sup> Here, Christ’s birth is symbolized as the rising of the Sun which gives light to all and avoids the darkness of the earth. In the service of the *danahô*, Christ is symbolized as the Sun who came to the Jordan for baptism, and thus illuminated all with His light.<sup>83</sup> In the *prômiûn* of the service of the Pentecost, Christ is referred to the Sun of justice.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the Syriac liturgical tradition highlights the idea of the birth and baptism of Christ as the rising of the Sun to illuminate the whole of creation. Finally, His cross also is seen exalted as a cross of light and light-house. The light which Christ spreads from the light-house helps to avoid the darkness of the world. In this sense, Ephrem symbolises the crucified Christ also as the Sun. “The crucified is a brilliant Sun who diffused His light in the waters (of baptism). He calls the nations who are held in darkness to descend (in the water), to be clothed in the light, to adorn themselves, and give out rays in His light”.<sup>85</sup> This idea is very clear from the above prayers and hymns. Ephrem compares John the Baptist as lamp and Christ as the real Sun, the real Bridegroom. “In the lamp the eye sees a likeness of the Sun, its real Bridegroom; the Church has seen in John the

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *The Text of the Feasts of the Liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *The Text of the Feasts of the Liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church*, p. 67.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *The Text of the Feasts of the Liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church*, p. 92. This idea is again, we find in the whole *prômiûn-sêdrô* of the service of the blessing of the water (pp. 97-99).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Prômiûn* of the second service of the Pentecost, *The Text of the Feasts of the Liturgy of the Malankara Catholic Church*, p. 263.

<sup>85</sup> EPHREM, *HEpi.* 13; CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, pp. 189-90; 175-76; cf. S. J. BEGGIANI, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality: The Syriac Tradition*, p. 112.



likeness of her true Husband".<sup>86</sup> Ephrem says that our naked eyes are too weak to look at the brightness of the Sun. "The eye is too weak to fix on the great brightness of the Sun. Without the Son of the Invisible, the eye would not know how to see the Invisible".<sup>87</sup> Ephrem in another context, symbolises both the Creator and Christ as the Light. "Give thanks to the Creator of the light wherein is depicted the heavenly light; give praise to the Maker of the light that is a symbol of the light of our Saviour".<sup>88</sup>

Malankara liturgy celebrates the theme of light especially in the *yaldô* service where there is a special celebration of fire which symbolises the birth of Christ as a light in the world. Here, the salvific effect of the light is emphasised. The liturgy emphasises that Christ's light shines in the hearts of the people, enlightens us in the darkness, and the rays of His light help us to walk in His light. Mentioning the aspect of Christ's arrival as the Sun, Ephrem says, "At the coming of our Sun, the lamps have accomplished their task".<sup>89</sup> Ephrem is of opinion that Christ's arrival as Sun with His light removed the darkness. "Glory to Him who showed His light in the darkness".<sup>90</sup> Again, in Cyrillona's *memra on the Crucifixion*, we find references to this image, "Our Lord arose

<sup>86</sup> EPHREM, *HVirg.* 5:9; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 19; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.151.

<sup>87</sup> EPHREM, *HFid.* 6:2-3; CSCO 154-155/Scr.Syr. 73-74, p. 24-25, 19; cf. S. J. BEGGIANI, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality: The Syriac Tradition*, p. 27.

<sup>88</sup> EPHREM, *HEccl.* 36:1; CSCO 198-199/Scr.Syr. 84-85, p. 90, 87; cf. S. J. BEGGIANI, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality: The Syriac Tradition*, p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> *HVirg.* 9; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr.94-95, pp. 31-32

<sup>90</sup> *HNat.* 2; CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr.82-83, pp. 13-14, 12-13. In another hymn, Ephrem says that Christ as the Light removed darkness from Sheol through His descent there. "Death opened the gates of Sheol and there shone from it the splendour of the face of our Lord"; *CNis.* 41; CSCO 218-219/Scr.Syr.92-93, pp. 32-33, 25.



like a Warrior, he trampled His place like a Champion ... His person shone like the sun and His limbs became like rays".<sup>91</sup>

The bridal symbolism gave rise to an extensive system of ecclesiology that borrowed ideas from Hellenistic astrology and mysticism, and presented the Church as moon (female) receiving light and life from Christ as Sun (male).<sup>92</sup> In this way, the Church always reflects Christ the Sun. Christ is the Light of the world and He enlightens the Church with His light. Origen says, "As the moon receives her light from the sun in order that she also might give light to the night, so also the Church, receiving her light from Christ, enlightens all those who find themselves in the night of ignorance".<sup>93</sup> Therefore, Christ is the true light which enlightens the Church, receiving light from Him, and she herself is the 'light of the world', bringing light to those who are in darkness.

Jacob of Serugh, in his *homily on the Nativity of Our Lord*, symbolizes Christ as the Great Sun (الْمَسْمُومُ; ط), "The Great Sun who furnished His dwelling among the poor and with His flashes He clothed them in light and brightness".<sup>94</sup> Again in the prose homily on the Nativity, he mentions, "Today

<sup>91</sup> *Crucif.* 291-314; cf. Cyrillona, *Hymni et sermones*, Syr. ed. G. BICKELL, ZDMG 27 (1873) 573-74; C. VONA (tr.) *I Carmi di Cirillona*, Roma, 1963, pp. 85-86; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.169.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. D. WINZEN, "Symbols of the Church", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, McGraw-Hill Book Company, The Catholic University of America, Washington, 1967, p. 725.

<sup>93</sup> ORIGEN, *In Genesim* 1, 5-6; PG 12, 53-56; cf. *Hom. Sur la Genèse*, SC 7 (1943) 70; cf. G. AFONSKY, *Christ and the Church in Orthodox Teaching and Tradition*, p. 100.

<sup>94</sup> *S. Martyrii qui et Sahdona, quae supersunt omnia*, P. BEDJAN (ed.), Harrassowitz, Lipsiae, Parisiis, 1902, p. 804 (Hom. no. 8); cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, III 286, p. 124.



the dawn has shone forth from the cave, and the great Sun (has risen) from the narrow crevices of the cave in order to illuminate by His brilliance the lowest abysses, the region that is not easy for the sun to illumine".<sup>95</sup> In his typological exegesis on the veil of Moses, he says:

"While it was night the prophets set up a torch on earth to show the way by which the world might reach daylight. But when the great sun of righteousness arrived he removed them from a service for which they were no longer fitted .....

for the day light is spread over the mountains at his great epiphany.

The entire earth is filled with the light of the great Sun".<sup>96</sup>

Narsai also in his *homily for the Feast Day of the Ascension*, calls Christ the 'Sun of Justice':

"The Sun of Justice also ascended to the highest point of heaven

and cast error and its preachers into the depths of the earth.

At the third hour when light had started out of darkness,

It interrupted its progress and confined and detained it in a lower position...".<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> JACQUES DE SAROUG, *Six Homélie Festales en Prose*, PO 43, Fasc. 4, No. 196, p. 544 (Hom. no. 1); French trans. by F. RILLIET, "Aujourd'hui l'aurore est montée de la grotte et le Grand Soleil (s'est levé) du fond de la caverne pour illuminer de son éclat le fond des abîmes, lieu qu'il n'est pas facile au Soleil d'éclairer", PO 43, Fasc. 4, No. 196, p. 545. cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, IV 21, CIIS, Rome, 1997, p. 135.

<sup>96</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:433-47, p. 287; cf. S. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 83.

<sup>97</sup> F. G. McLEOD, "Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection and Ascension", PO, Tom. 40, Fasc. 1, No. 182, vv. 345-48, p. 183.



In the Book of the Steps (*Liber Graduum*), Christ is referred to as the Sun of justice: "Let us rather, be diligent in providing fruit lest, where there spring up children who perform the acceptable and perfect will of our Lord. We ourselves actually wither under the new Sun of justice, that Sun of mercy on whose wings is healing".<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the image 'Christ as the Sun' is a favourite theme in the Syriac liturgical tradition, and the Malankara liturgy also gives much emphasis to this image.

### 3.3. THE NUPTIAL IMAGE 'CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM' IN THE SYRIAC FATHERS AND WRITINGS

In the early Syriac Christianity, the theme 'Christ the Bridegroom' was very popular and was widely used by the Syriac Fathers and in other Syriac writings. The Fathers found the roots of this nuptial imagery in the three New Testament passages: first, in Christ's reply to the Pharisees on fasting, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" (Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34); second, John the Baptist identifies himself as the friend of the Bridegroom to whom the bride belongs (Jn 3:29); third, in the parable of the ten virgins, we find also an allusion to be ready and prepare for the real Bridegroom Christ, "and while they (foolish virgins) went to buy the oil, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast" (Mt 25:10). In all these passages, the Bridegroom is, by implication,

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<sup>98</sup> *Liber Graduum*, XVIII:5, PS, Pars I, Tom. III, p. 443, "in illo sole misericordiae, cuius alae sanationem baiulant"; cf. S. BROCK (ed.), *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1987, p. 59.



identified as Christ.<sup>99</sup> The nuptial imagery seen in the Syriac tradition, is used to demonstrate the divine-human relationships. Syriac Christianity used this imagery under inspiration from Old Testament prophetic orientations and from New Testament symbolic connotations.

### 3.3.1. Christ as the Bridegroom in Syriac Tradition

For the Syriac Fathers, Christ becomes the eschatological Bridegroom providing the good and new wine (Jn 2:1-11) in the marriage ceremony at Cana. Commenting on the marriage at Cana, Ephrem presents Christ as the heavenly Bridegroom, ready for His marriage, typified by the earthly bridegroom of Cana.<sup>100</sup> "Blessed are you, Cana, for it was the Bridegroom from on high, whom your bridegroom invited, whose wine ran out; he invited the guest who himself invited the Nations to a wedding feast of joy and life in Eden".<sup>101</sup>

The Syriac Fathers find a testimony of John the Baptist to Christ the Bridegroom in the following biblical passage, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the Bridegroom; the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears Him, rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom's

<sup>99</sup> S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 115; Narsai in his homily on Nativity, calls John the Baptist, 'the friend of the Bridegroom', Narsai says, "The friend of the Bridegroom has set up (as) a goal for us. Come let us learn (to make) in the faculties of (our) soul one confession". cf. F. G. McLEOD, "Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection and Ascension", *PO*, Tom. 40, Fasc. 1, No. 182, vv. 407-08, p. 63.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *HcHaer.* 47, 3; *CSCO* 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, pp. 183-84; 163; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp.137-38. In this passage, Ephrem says that the Church herself is known as the bride, and our Lord is the true Bridegroom.

<sup>101</sup> *HVirg.* 16:2; *CSCO* 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 55; 53.



voice; therefore, this joy of mine is now full" (Jn 3:28-29). Here, John the Baptist is pictured as the friend of the Bridegroom, witness and the bridal attendant. Jacob of Serugh, in his *Homily on the Baptism of Our Redeemer in the Jordan*, comments extensively on the role of John the Baptist who is pictured as the helper of Christ the Bridegroom and adorer of Christ's bride.

He called His faithful servant (John), son of a barren woman, and sent him beforehand to go and carry along the adornment to the bride before He comes. John (the Baptist) went out and carried the riches of the great treasure; so that he might adorn the daughter of the poor as he was ordered. .... The Church, the royal bride, approached towards John and he began washing, cleansing, polishing and sanctifying her.<sup>102</sup>

For the Syriac Fathers, Christ the Bridegroom is not alone. He has His 'friends' like John the Baptist, prophets and the apostles. Aphrahat comments: "He (Christ) is the Bridegroom, the Apostles are the 'betrothers', and we are the bride; let us prepare our dowry".<sup>103</sup> Again by indicating the role and position of the apostles and bishops, Aphrahat in his *Demonstration*, says, "You are the friends of the Bridegroom,

<sup>102</sup>*Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. 1, P. BEDJAN (ed.), Paris-Leipzig, 1905, pp. 168-73 (Hom. no. 8); cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, FH VI, 1-16, pp. 163-69. In the Homily on Epiphany also, we find the same idea. Jacob says that Christ the Bridegroom approaches John the Baptist to be purified like others who were destined to the bride; cf. *Festal Homily on Epiphany*, Hom. II, PO 43, Fasc. 4, No. 196, p. 557. In this homily, Jacob often mentions the important role of John the Baptist as the friend of the Bridegroom.

<sup>103</sup>*Dem.* 14:39; *PS*, pars prima, pp. 681-84. cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp.131, 165.



the good seed, the foundation laid on the rock ... You are the guests of the Bridegroom, arrayed in robes fit for the feast".<sup>104</sup> Aphrahat asks the covenanters to be vigilant and to prepare the coming of the Bridegroom. "Let us keep the appointed meeting with the glorious Bridegroom, so that we may enter with Him to His bridal chamber".<sup>105</sup> "Let us listen the voice of the Bridegroom so that we may enter the bridal chamber with him.... Let us prepare the gift for the wedding and go out to meet Him in joy (Mt 25:6)".<sup>106</sup>

Commenting on Eph 5:21-33, Ephrem speaks about the union of Christ, the Bridegroom and the Church His bride:

This pure love, which was ordained from Adam down to our Lord, was a symbol of our Lord's perfect love. Therefore, the Church has left idols and possessions, like father and mother; and Christ himself left his Father on high and his mother below, and died for his Church, so that by his death he might give life to the Church which he loved, and might raise her up and bring her to that kingdom of his.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Dem. 14; PS, pars prima, pp. 677-80; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.163-64.

<sup>105</sup> Dem. 6 :1, PS, pars prima, p. 240; Here, Aphrahat symbolises Christ as the glorious bridegroom cf. K. VALAVANOLICKAL, *Aphrahat Demonstrations*, p. 103. Sons of the covenant (*bar qyâmâ*) = Aphrahat's Demonstrations give much evidence that he was a son of the covenant (Dem. 6:4, 19; 7:5; 18:1 etc.). He uses also many terms like *ahay* (my brothers) *ahayn* (our brothers) *habibây ihidâye* (dearly beloved solitaires). So, Aphrahat was a *bar qyâmâ* (son of the covenant, an *ihidâyâ* (celibate, single, solitary), and a *qaddiṣa* (chaste); cf. also G. NEDUNGATT, "The Covenanters of the Early Syriac Speaking Church", *OCP* 39 (1973) 191-215; 419-44.

<sup>106</sup> Dem. 6,1, PS, pars prima, p. 253; cf. K. VALAVANOLICKAL, *Aphrahat Demonstrations*, pp. 108-09. In Dem. 6:2, 4, 6 also, we find several times references on Christ as the Bridegroom.

<sup>107</sup> EPHREM, *EC Arm.* III, CSCO 137, p. 150; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.138. Here, his interpretation of 'leaving father and mother' is more in line with the general Christian tradition.



The marriage of Christ the Bridegroom and His Church is a frequent theme in Ephrem's hymns. He narrates how God delivered His bride from Egypt and espoused her at Sinai; but she committed adultery. "The King's Son, when he saw her wickedness, came and betrothed to himself the Church of the Gentiles, whose love and trueness he had tested. He made her one with himself and himself with her, that there might be no separation".<sup>108</sup> Again in another hymn, Ephrem presents Christ as the immortal Bridegroom with regard to His Incarnation: "The Firstborn was clothed in the body; it was the veil of his glory. The immortal Bridegroom will shine forth in this robe".<sup>109</sup> In his *hymns on Virginity*, again he presents Christ as the heavenly Bridegroom: "The Heavenly Bridegroom who has come down and invited all .... Among men on earth shall I acknowledge Him as Bridegroom for there is none other beside; His bridal chamber is established for eternity".<sup>110</sup> Ephrem, here weaves three different Gospel themes together; John the Baptist as the friend of the true Bridegroom (Jn 3:29), and as 'lamp' (Jn 5:35), and the 'lamps' of the Parable of the Virgins (Mt chapter 25).

The feeble lamp is a symbol of John; both exist for a limited time; the lamp is not the bridegroom of the eye, nor is John the bridegroom of the Church. They are friends of the two bridegrooms (the sun and Christ) and beloved by the two brides; they were not bridegrooms, but icons

<sup>108</sup> *HFid.* 14,6; CSCO 154-155/Scr.Syr. 73-74, p. 62, 47; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 139.

<sup>109</sup> *CNis.* 43, 20-21; CSCO 240-241/Scr.Syr. 102-103, p. 45; 35; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 76; S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 95.

<sup>110</sup> *HVirg.* 33:3; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 120; 104; cf. S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 124.

of the Unique Bridegroom. The eye sees with the help of a lamp which resembles the sun, its true bridegroom; the Church beheld in John the semblance of her true Partner. Oil (*meshha*) enriches the light of lamps, as though in symbol; Christ (*Meshiha*) enriches the lamps of the virgins who are betrothed to Him.<sup>111</sup>

Again, Ephrem presents John the Baptist, the betrother who is aware about the bride of His Lord:

John the betrother became aware that the bride of His Lord was looking to him  
as if he – a mere servant – was himself that Lord,  
so he revealed that he was but the servant; .... he showed his humble role,  
he showed her both the glory and his own lowly estate,  
when he told her that he was not even worthy  
to loosen the strap of the Bridegroom's sandal.  
Blessed is He who instructed John thus to teach her.<sup>112</sup>

In another popular anonymous dialogue hymn, we find again the same idea: "My imagination wafted me to the Jordan where I beheld a wonder. When the glorious Bridegroom was revealed to make a marriage feast for the bride and to sanctify her".<sup>113</sup> Like other Syriac Fathers, Narsai also calls Christ, the Bridegroom: "He (John) gathered and brought (together) the

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<sup>111</sup> *HVirg.* 5:9; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 19; 19; cf. S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 121.

<sup>112</sup> *HcHaer.* 24:6; CSCO 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, pp. 91-92; 87; S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 121.

<sup>113</sup> *Soghitha* 5:1; CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, pp. 217; 201; cf. S. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 122.



sons of Jacob who were scattered ... He invited them to the banquet of the spiritual Bridegroom ...".<sup>114</sup> Again he says:

He (John) compared him to a bridegroom (Jn 3:29) because of his love for men; and he called the bride, the members of his race who adhered to him. (This one) fulfilled (the role) of the bridegroom at the marriage feast of faith and took to himself the Church of the Gentiles (as) his betrothed of holiness. Instead of purple, he covered her with the garment of baptism and placed on her (head) a crown wholly plaited with the seals of the Spirit.<sup>115</sup>

We find that Narsai's Christological doctrine is here expressed through its soteriological framework. Because of Adam's sin, God the Father sent His Word to restore and fulfil the eternal salvific plan and to redeem the universe through His death.<sup>116</sup>

In the *Odes of Solomon*, we find, "Like the arm of the Bridegroom over the Bride, so is my yoke over those who know me; and as the bride-chamber that is spread in the marriage-house, so is my love over those that believe in me" (42: 8-9). In the *Acts of Judas Thomas* also, the devotion to Christ the Beloved and the 'true Bridegroom' is expressed: "her bridal chamber is lit up and full of the fragrance of salvation ....The living are in attendance upon her and they look to their Bridegroom to come, and they shall shine with

<sup>114</sup> NARSAI, *Homily on Epiphany*; cf. F G McLEOD, "Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection and Ascension", *PO*, Tom. 40, Fasc. 1, No. 182, vv. 403-05, p. 95.

<sup>115</sup> NARSAI, *Homily on Epiphany*; F. G. McLEOD, "Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection and Ascension", *PO*, Tom. 40, Fasc. 1, No. 182, vv. 409-14, p. 95.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. F. G. McLEOD, "Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection and Ascension", *PO*, Tom. 40, Fasc. 1, No. 182, pp. 22-23.



His glory, and shall be with Him in the kingdom which never passes away".<sup>117</sup> In the hymn of Balai (5th century) for the consecration of the Church, we find that Christ is symbolized as the Bridegroom: "The place is adorned, crowned with glory, for this is the festal day of the wedding; new is the bridechamber, Christ is the Bridegroom, the 'Watchers' are exulting, men are giving thanks".<sup>118</sup>

### 3.3.2. The Image 'Christ as the Bridegroom and His Betrothal of the Church at Jordan' in Jacob of Serugh

Like Ephrem, Jacob of Serugh also sees the baptism of Christ in Jordan as the betrothal of Christ and the Church, 'the bride of Light'.<sup>119</sup> Jacob finds here an important Old

<sup>117</sup> W. WRIGHT (ed.), *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, vol. I, The Syiac Text, Williams & Norgate, London, 1871, pp. 176-77; vol. II, English trans. p. 151; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 133-34.

<sup>118</sup> S. *Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae ep. Edesseni, Balaei aliorumque opera selecta*, ed. OVERBECK J. J., Typographeo Clarendoniano, Oxonii, 1865, stanza 14, p. 252; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 272. Nothing is known of the life of Balai the great poet, except that he was a chorepiskopos, perhaps in the area around Aleppo. Among his writings, he has written a *madrasha* for the dedication of a new church in Qenneshrin and many short liturgical *bô 'ûtô* (supplicatory hymns which is largely used in the Malankara liturgy also) in the five-syllable metre (known as the metre of Balai).

<sup>119</sup> Jacob of Serugh was a Syrian Orthodox poet, born at Kurtam on the Euphrates around the time of the Council of Chalcedon (451). He was brought up at Hawra near to Edessa and appointed a bishop in 519 and died in 521. He is regarded as a saint and doctor by both the Syrian Orthodox and the Maronite churches. He was a prolific writer and was reputed with his prose sermons and homilies (*memre*). He is esteemed together with St. Ephrem as a jewel of Syrian Christianity. His way of thinking is essentially symbolic like that of Ephrem; He is one of the greatest poets of the early Syriac tradition. His metrical homilies contributed much to the exegetico-theological tradition of the early Syriac Christianity. His prose writings, festal homilies, liturgical anaphorae, hymns and melodies are common patrimony of the Syrian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox and Maronites. They fall under different literary genres such as *memre*, *madrâse*, *sogyâtâ*. He is well known for



Testament type - the Patriarch Jacob's betrothal to Rachel at the well (Gen 29). Here, Jacob of Serugh considers the betrothal of Rachel at the well of Haran as a type of Christ's betrothal of the Church of the Gentiles.<sup>120</sup> Jacob parallels God's betrothal to Israel with that of Christ's betrothal to the 'Church of the Nations'. God's betrothal takes place on Sinai, and Christ's betrothal at Jordan. John the Baptist, showed to the bride who her Lord is and the Bridegroom himself has come to her like a lamb who carries away the sins of the world in His sacrifice. In the *homily on the Baptism of Our Redeemer*, Jacob says of the betrothal of Christ to the Church of the nations:

Christ, the Bridegroom prepared the marriage feast (Mt 22:2-14; Lk 14:16-24) for the Church of the nations, and the world became aware of the wedding feast He had furnished for her (the Church). The Son of the Kingdom wished to betroth (Hos 2:19, 20; 2Cor 11:2) the afflicted one. And He sent her to the fountain to wash away her dust (Zech 13:1) ..... and He sent the bride to go down to clothe herself from the waters.<sup>121</sup>

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his symbolic theology and typological biblical exegesis. cf. S. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 70-85; cf. also S. BROCK, *Môrân 'Ethô - 9: A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, pp. 213, 310-11; cf. S. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 328, 341.

<sup>121</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.), *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. I, pp. 167-68; cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, Homily VI, 1-16, p. 162-63. The Syriac writers were interested in the ecclesiological figure of the betrothal of Christ the Bridegroom to the bride and the Church of the Nations; cf. *HS* Vol. 1, 167,9; 458, 15-18; *Dem.* 16:4-5, PS Pars Prima, pp. 772-77; R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 41-68. The imagery of 'betrothal and marriage feast' is a more recurrent theme in Jacob. For him, couple is an image of Christ, the Bridegroom. The marriage is blessed through Him; cf. W. DeVRIES, "Sakramententheologie bei den Syrischen Monophysites", *OCA* 125 (1940) 244.



Again in the *Homily on the Transfiguration of Our Lord*, Jacob speaks about the Father who betrothed the Daughter of Light, the Church, and brought the cloud of light as a bridal chamber (*gnûnô*) to his Only-begotten (*ihidâyâ*), the Bridegroom of Light: "His Father portrayed the bride of light in the cloud of light ... He betrothed her to His Son because the Bridegroom as well is wholly light. He designated the Church in the single cloud of great light.... That One is the blessed Bridegroom because everything has been perfected in his mystery".<sup>122</sup> According to Jacob of Serugh, the whole economy of salvation is symbolically depicted in terms of 'betrothal and marriage feast'. The heavenly Bridegroom prepared the marriage feast for the earthly bride. In this 'great betrothal' of the heavenly Bridegroom, we find also some groomsmen like John the Baptist. Moses recognized how Christ and the Church became one in the waters of Jordan considering Gen. 2:24, "a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife. And they become one flesh". For Jacob, Paul removed the veil and proclaimed the truth in Ephesians:

With the exalted eye of the prophecy Moses saw Christ, and how He and His Church would be one in the waters of baptism, he saw Him putting on her in the virgin womb and her putting on Him in the baptismal water: Bridegroom and bride are spiritually perfected as one. The veiled

<sup>122</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.), *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. II, pp. 374-75; cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, FH VIII, 553-82, p. 229-30. In the Syriac tradition, Church is called the 'Daughter of Light' and 'Bride of Light in the context of Christ being the 'Bridegroom of Light'; cf. HS Vol. II, 374,17; vol. VIII 577; HS vol. I, 173, 181,18; 186,21; HS vol.II, 374,15. For the details on 'Bride of Light' cf. S. P. BROCK, "Bride of Light", *Môrân 'Eth'ô* 6 (1994) 97-98.



Moses saw Christ and called Him 'man', He saw the Church too, and called her 'woman' as a device.<sup>123</sup>

By the nuptial imagery, Jacob of Serugh meant the whole economy of salvation in which it depicts the person and activities of Christ who gives salvation to all. In his homilies, Jacob exposes the divine and human aspects in the background on the biblical history of salvation. In his prose *homily on the Sunday of Hosanna*, Jacob says that the daughter of Jerusalem, the bride, fell into fornication and adultery. When the royal Bridegroom who was already betrothed at Sinai came to His bride in order to celebrate the marriage feast, she rejected Him. Jacob parallels it with the event of Christ's entering the temple of His Father, but the Bridegroom found the bridal chamber converted into a company of brigands. Jacob describes beautifully in the above homily the unfaithful bride's turning away from the Bridegroom.<sup>124</sup>

According to Jacob, the betrothal of the heavenly Bridegroom to the earthly bride takes place not only in the Jordan, but also in different stages. The Bridegroom came down through the Incarnation and received the bride. The manger at Bethlehem became the 'nuptial chamber' for the heavenly Bridegroom to unite Himself to the human race.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>123</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.), *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis* (HS), vol. III, 288,7-16; T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh: An Exegetico-theological Study on the Homilies of Jacob of Serugh (451-521 AD) on the Feasts of Our Lord*, p. 232.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. JACQUES DE SARUG, *Six Homélie Festales en Prose*, F. RILLIET (ed.), PO 43, Fasc. 4, No. 196, Hom. IV : 21-25 ; pp. 594-96.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. JACQUES DE SARUG, *Six Homélie Festales en Prose*, PO 43, F. RILLIET (ed.), Hom. IV:9, pp. 588-90; cf. T. KOLLAMPARAMPIL, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, p. 132.



So, in the Syriac tradition, Incarnation is viewed as Christ's 'marriage' with the human race. Another important stage of the betrothal, as we have seen already, is His baptism in the Jordan, and it became fully manifested later at the Crucifixion. "The daughter of day (the Church) is betrothed on the cross in a betrothal feast of blood ...".<sup>126</sup> All these stages show divine-human aspects. The Nativity of the divine Bridegroom made Him small within the dimensions of humanity so that He could enter into the bridal chamber of the cave in Bethlehem. At the baptism in the Jordan, He brings in sanctification and the 'garment of the Spirit'. Finally, on the cross, His betrothal becomes fully consummated by His total self-giving to the bride through His precious blood as the dowry for her marriage. Thus, the baptism in the Jordan reaches its climax with the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. Again in another hymn, Jacob expresses how Christ the Bridegroom chose His bride the Church, and how the role of the Trinity functions in her:

Christ entered upon the house, chose a stone, and set the foundation,  
 (gave the bride) an earnest to overcome death and Satan.  
 The Great Apostle was the foundation of the Great House  
 which the bride was to enter (as) a stronghold undefiled.....  
 The Bridegroom chose it, His Father carved it in that  
 revelation.  
 And the Holy Ghost had it finished  
 and settled in the foundation of the Church.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. II, p. 587; cf. S. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 328.

<sup>127</sup> JACOB OF SERUGH, *De Interrog. Christ et Revel. Petri*, Hom. XXIV; Cod. Vat. (Syr.) 460, p. 181; cf. G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition", *SCC-6*, p. 54.



### 3.4. CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF MARRIAGE

The title 'Christ as the Bridegroom' and the mystery to which it refers is the starting point of the Christology of marriage. In this manner, the Malankara liturgy of marriage presents Christian marriage as a sign of God's salvific and covenant relationship with His people which culminates in the saving work of Christ. The prayers and hymns insist that the Christian spouses have to follow the ideal and model of the covenant love of Christ towards the Church His bride. It is through this participation in the Christ-Church relationship that the spouses receive the grace. MLM presents the image Christ as the Bridegroom many times in its prayers and hymns. It shows the importance of the christological dimension mentioned in the liturgy. Many liturgical passages express the Christ-Church relationship as a model for the Christian couple. Many of the prayers and patristic images mentioned under the image 'Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church' express the christological dimension of marriage. Though we have already seen many of the passages in the first part of this chapter, we mention some of the important texts here: (1) The Heavenly Bridegroom betrothed Himself to the earthly Church.<sup>128</sup> (2) Christ gave the Church, the ring which is His innocent Body and Blood.<sup>129</sup> (3) The Church is redeemed by His precious Blood.<sup>130</sup> (4) In the Cross He sealed His dowry to the Church.<sup>131</sup>

The Fathers have often mentioned that Christ betrothed the Church at the river Jordan, married her on the Cross, and

<sup>128</sup> MLM 47; ET 238; ST 33.

<sup>129</sup> MLM 49; ET 239; ST 35; MLM 53; ET 243; ST 42.

<sup>130</sup> MLM 50; ET 239; ST 36.

<sup>131</sup> MLM 78; ET 255; ST 61.



gave His blood as dowry and His body as the ring. All these references show the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church. They express the mystery of the Christian marriage in its Christ-Church relationship and thus MLM expresses its christological dimension. This is expressed in the liturgy through various patristic symbols and images. This intimate relationship remains forever by Christ's permanent presence with her. All these references show how Christ loves the Church as His proper bride (Eph 5:25) and how each married person should love his partner. The Christ-Church relationship remains the greatest model for Christian marriage. In order to understand this christological dimension better, we have to find out the symbolical meaning of the Christ-Church relationship.

#### **3.4.1. Christ-Church Relation: A Manifestation of Personal Love**

In the Christ-Church relationship, the personal love of each other is manifested in its full sense. The relation between Christ and the Church is well expressed in Eph 5: 21-32. In this personal relation, Christ is present always in the Church and the Church represents the object and manifestation of His love. Thus, in the concept of Bridegroom-Bride, the relation between Christ and the Church is a personal one. This relationship is one of love – 'Christ loves the Church as His bride'. The Church also expresses her condition as a faithful bride, dedicating herself fully to Him. Utilising the comparison for the moral scope, Paul follows the descending line of symbolism. The *analogatum princeps* is the relation between Christ and the Church, and this must be better understood in



his words, "and you husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church and He gave Himself for her". In the matrimonial rites, the wife is exhorted to be obedient to her husband as the Church is to Christ. The husband is, of course, the head of the wife, also as Christ is head of the Church. Peter also says, "So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (I Pet 3:5-6a). From this symbolism, we are able to develop the significance of the ascending level (many symbols are reversible i.e ascending and descending, as the ladder of Jacob in Gen 28:10). In Eastern theology, images and symbols are more intensively seen in their reversibility. The love of husband and wife is a concrete and visible experience. It is introduced on the better knowledge of the invisible relation between Christ and the Church. Since marriage is an image of Christ and the Church, the role of both husband and wife is christological. In this sense, the wife must completely accept the husband's Christ-like love. The husband also must love his wife as Christ does. Thus both roles are christological and demand total self-renunciation like that of Christ.<sup>132</sup> This idea is well expressed in the liturgical admonition.<sup>133</sup>

The Malankara liturgy of marriage insists upon the idea that the marital covenant made between two persons is like the permanent relationship and union between Christ and the Church. In this sense, every Christian marriage is an image of Christ who accepted the Church as His bride. The sacrament

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. S. F. MILETIC, "One Flesh": Eph. 5:22-24, 5:31: *Marriage and the New Creation*, p. 111.

<sup>133</sup> MLM 83; ET 257; ST 65.

of marriage is instituted in the model of Christ's love towards the Church. It is the symbol of Christ's selfless and sacrificial love on the cross. Those who are married become the real witnesses to this 'mysterious' love of Christ. There are many expressions profoundly significant in the christological vision of marriage. Christian marriage which is of one life, but it contains two important images. The two main images connected with the christological vision of marriage are: the wife as the husband's image and the husband as the wife's head.

#### **3.4.1.1. The Wife as the Image of the Husband**

God creates man in His image. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27). Therefore, the existence of the two sexes is connected to the conviction that man is the image of God. Adam the man is the image of God; and Eve the woman is the image of the man. The moral consequence that derives from it is in one direction - the perfect obedience of the wives in respect of the husband. The reflections of the Fathers are fully concentrated on the descending line of images: the heavenly Father as the archetype, the divine Son as Image of the Father, man as the image of Christ, and woman as the image of the man. The expression 'the wife - image of the husband' is seen in light of the ancient christological discussion on the Word - Image of the Father.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, "La concezione cristologica del matrimonio nelle liturgie orientali", *Varia I -articoli nelle riviste-* (1958-1979) 139-44.



### 3.4.1.2. The Husband as the Head of the Wife

The unity of the different human persons in the Church is the unity of 'one body' with many members, including the head. Christ is the head of the Church, because it is vivified from His Spirit. It can be said in this context, of the 'head and of members' since the Church is visible. Here, the husband is the 'head' in the sense of being the principle of unity. In the Trinity, the Father is absolutely first, a principle known as the monarchy of the Father. In the family, husbands are the head and have the moral duty 'to love their wives'. In this way, there is a reciprocal dependence between husband and wife. They help one another to attain holiness in their married life. This idea is mentioned in MLM as follows: "Strengthen them, O Lord, to help each other to keep purity in spirit and in body".<sup>135</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasises the aspect of this reciprocal dependence. "Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses... to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to 'be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ' and to love one another with supernatural, tender and fruitful love".<sup>136</sup> In this way, man and woman are complementary and is united in their reciprocal relationship. Each one is with and for the other and discovers his/her self in relation to the other.<sup>137</sup> The relation between husband and wife in the Christian family is an important source of Christology and ecclesiology since the relations between Christ and the Church throw light on this human and visible image.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, the spousal union in marriage finds its

<sup>135</sup> MLM 52; ET 241; ST 38.

<sup>136</sup> CCC, 2nd ed., no. 1642, pp. 409-10.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. J. VANIER, *Man and Woman He Made Them*, p. 49.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, "La concezione cristologica del matrimonio nelle liturgie orientali", *Varia* I, 144-48.



perfect christological dimension as this image is situated very clearly in the three main moments of Christ's life, as we have discussed in this chapter: birth (Incarnation), life (presence at Cana and His teachings on indissoluble union); and death on the Cross.

### **3.4.2. Christ, Head of the Church as the Model of Christian Marriage**

The Malankara liturgy of marriage presents Christ as the real and righteous Bridegroom of the Church. Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom is the model of every sacramental marriage. MLM in its prayers and hymns, expresses the eternal and indissoluble union between Christ and the Church. The Fathers are of the opinion that this union is very intimate as it is bought by Christ's blood and He gave His body and blood as His ring for their permanent covenant. As the head of the Church, Christ bestowed imperishable blessings on her. He clothed her with the robe of glory. By His power He crushed the head of the enemy. He granted her the ring which is His own body and blood. He illumined her with His splendid light and gave her the divine gifts and imperishable richness.<sup>139</sup> It is in this way, Christ showed His headship over the Church.

Christ's headship creates intimacy with the Church. For this, Christ gave Himself fully to her. Therefore, this relationship is indissoluble because he bought her with his own blood, He gave His own body as the ring and other imperishable blessings. This headship is permanent and remains till the end of the world. Christ promises His eternal

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<sup>139</sup> MLM 48; ET 239; ST 34.



presence to her: "I am with you till the end of the world".<sup>140</sup> In the liturgy of marriage, the celebrant prays for the same imperishable gifts that He gave to the Church, and victory over evil powers to the couple also. When the celebrant places the crown upon the head of the bridegroom and bride, he prays, "May the Lord crown you with the crown of righteousness and glory and give you the victorious sword against all evil powers".<sup>141</sup> It is Christ Himself who is the heavenly Bridegroom seals the marriage of the couple. "May Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom seal your marriage and as He rejoices in the Church may you also rejoice in each other".<sup>142</sup> All these references express the christological dimension of the MLM.

The christological dimension of marriage is well expressed under the image 'Christ as the head of the Church' in the Pauline epistle (Eph 5:20-33), which is read in the Malankara liturgy of marriage. Therefore, it is important to note here a two-fold equivalence i.e., the Church as the Body of Christ (Col 1:24), and Christ as the Head of the Church (Col 1:18; Eph 1:22; 5:23). This idea is expressed also in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. "Christ provides for our growth, to make us grow toward him, our Head. He provides in His Body the Church, the gifts and assistance by which we help one another along the way of salvation .... Christ and His Church thus together make up the 'whole Christ' (*Christus totus*). The Church is one with Christ".<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> MLM 56; ET 243; ST 42.

<sup>141</sup> MLM 75; ET 253; ST 58.

<sup>142</sup> MLM 77; ET 254; ST 61.

<sup>143</sup> CCC, nos. 794-95, p. 210. CCC explains that the unity between Christ and His Church make up the whole Christ (*Christus totus*) in which the Church is united and one with Christ.



The New Testament often expresses the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church. These relationships are united in the Pauline ideas of bride and body. Paul, on the one hand depicts Church as the Body of Christ, and on the other hand, he expresses the idea that Christ is the spiritual and hidden head of this Body. In Paul, *kephale* has a hierarchical sense: chief, authority, first, principal, head of the Body. It is better here to compare Eph 5:23 with I Cor 11:3 where the image of 'headship' is beautifully presented: "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God". Again, in Col 2:10, Paul portrays Christ as "the head of all rule and authority". Christ is depicted as the fountain head from which all power and authority proceed. Within this physiological sense, the role of the head in relation to the body is evident. In this sense, Paul shows the vital principle: "We are to grow up in every way into him, who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together be every point with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and up builds itself in love" (Eph 4:15-16). Thus, in this sense of vital principle, the head plays a new role, not only of control, but also of animation. Here, the idea 'Christ as head' is used in its twofold meaning: as that of superiority (Eph 5:23-24), and as that of close union even in the stronger image of the relationship between husband and wife (vv. 25-29). The blending of these two meanings into a single one safeguards the ideas of superiority and of vital union.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. J. HAMER, *The Church is a Communion*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1964, pp. 51-63.



### 3.4.3. The Christocentric Dimension of the Nuptial Message

MLM reminds the couple to lead their life in the way that of Christ towards the Church and the Church towards her Bridegroom Christ. In the conclusion of the marriage service, the celebrant greets the couple in the following words: "May Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom seal your marriage and as He rejoices in the Church may you also rejoice in each other. May the right hand of mercy come and descend upon you and keep you in all difficulties ...".<sup>145</sup> Here, the christocentric life in the marital life is mentioned. The same idea is expressed also in the last admonition given to the couples in the marriage service.<sup>146</sup> These liturgical passages reveal the nuptial message with christological and ecclesial meaning: the headship of Christ over His Church and His espousing of the Church in self-sacrificing love. "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself is its Saviour. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands" (Eph 5:22-24). Here, Christ is depicted as the head of the Church (Eph 5:23b, Col 1:18). In I Cor 11:3, the man is pictured as head of the woman while in Ephesians, the husband and Christ are respectively the head of the wife (5: 23a) and of the Church (5:23b). There is a close relationship between the address to wives at 5:22-24 and that of Col 3:18. The text of Col 3:18 reads, "wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord". Here, Paul

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<sup>145</sup> MLM 77; ET 254; ST 59.

<sup>146</sup> MLM 83; ET 257; ST 62.



is incorporating christological (5:22: 'as to the Lord'; 5:23b, 'Christ is head of the Church'), soteriological (5:23c, 'he, saviour of the body), and ecclesiological (5:24a, and as the Church is subordinate to Christ') elements into the address to wives. The logical structure of vv. 22-24 indicates the 'head-body' and 'subordination' language which depends ultimately upon the soteriological statement as 'saviour' in v. 23c and christological statement as 'head' about Christ in v. 23b. This reveals the christological dimension of marriage in which central role and importance of Christ is stressed as the 'head' and 'saviour'.<sup>147</sup>

The use of the 'head-body' imagery with Christ and the Church occurs only in Colossians (1:18, 2:19) and Ephesians (1:22-23, 4:15-16, 5:23). Here, the ecclesiological use of the 'body' and the christological use of 'head' are clearly mentioned. The phrase 'as to the Lord' introduces a vertical or christocentric dimension (person to the Lord) within the horizontal dimension (person to person), and this safeguards the integrity of the horizontal relationship. But the term *kyrios* can only refer to Christ; only He is Lord of the wife, not the husband. The christocentric focus is clear here because the horizontal wife/husband relationship is now linked to the heavenly Christ/Church relationship by means of the wife/Church analogy.<sup>148</sup> Thus, in vv. 22-24, the christocentric nature of the 'head/body' and 'subordination' language is very clear because this headship analogy (vv. 23a-b) leads to the soteriological statement in v. 23c.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. S. F. MILETIC, "One Flesh": Eph. 5:22-24, 5:31: Marriage and the New Creation, pp. 9-25.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. S. F. MILETIC, "One Flesh": Eph. 5:22-24, 5:31: Marriage and the New Creation, pp. 33-42.



Thus, the flow of thought begins at the earthly sphere with the husband (v.23a), leads to Christ (vv. 23 b-c), remains in the heavenly sphere with the example of the Church (v. 24a) and then returns to the earthly sphere with the wife (v. 24b), the heavenly sphere (vv.23b-24a) is completely encased by the earthly one (vv.22, 23a, 24b) and 5.23c is at the theological centre.<sup>149</sup>

#### 3.4.4. Christ's Model Headship: Source of Oneness and Unity in Marriage

Christ's headship over the Church is a real model for the spouses and it is the source of oneness and unity in marriage. Here, the Christ-Church relationship remains a model for loving authority and loving obedience in the life of the spouses. The husband's headship over his wife demands the 'subjection' to one another which is to be mutual. This is in no sense servile or abject. St. Thomas sees it as 'for their own advantage and well being' of the wives.<sup>150</sup> Rather it emphasises unity. The headship of Christ over His Church is the key to unity between husband and wife. The motive of the authority of the head that powers the bridegroom in matrimony is of natural and supernatural order. According to Paul, the wives must be subject to their husbands, as the Church to Christ (Eph 5:22-23). Thus, the virtue of the sacrament of matrimony flows from the love between Christ and the Church. Pius XI says that "the husband is the prince of the family and the head

<sup>149</sup> S. F. MILETIC, *"One Flesh": Eph. 5:22-24, 5:31: Marriage and the New Creation*, p. 45.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae, Cum Textu ex Recensione Leonina*, ed. P. CARMELLO, Marietti, Roma, 1956, Tom. 1, p. 451; cf. P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .....: The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 52.



of the wife".<sup>151</sup> Not only the grace of the sacrament that constitutes the man head of the family, but also the very nature shows him more suitable to such duty. This paternal authority and duty of the husband in the family demands a loving authority from one part and a loving obedience from the other part. Here, this authority and obedience should be similar to that of Christ and the Church. Paul gives the model for it: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her..." (Eph 5 :25-28). The love of Christ for the Church must be a model which inspires the spouses to realize and observe that order of love which demands the full understanding and respect of each other.<sup>152</sup>

It is important to note here how Christ exercised His authority. In Mk 10:45, we read that "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many". Christ's way of exercising authority was in the form of service. Therefore, Paul says that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her (5: 25). It is in this sense, every husband must be head of his wife, that is, in the sense of service. It is not a headship to exercise control over her by making unreasonable demands or reduce her to the state of a servant. His primary duty is service as with Christ. In v. 22, wives are exhorted to be subject to their husbands. What type of subjection is this? There is no matter of fear in this subjection. In v. 25, the husbands are exhorted to love their

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<sup>151</sup> Pius XI has taken this idea from the encyclical *Arcanum* di Leone XIII. cf. *Insegnamenti Pontifici*, Il Matrimonio, ed. Paolina, Roma, 1957, n. 156; cf. F. ESPOSITO., *Matrimonio: Società d'amore* (da Pio XI al Concilio Vaticano Secondo), p. 127.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. F. ESPOSITO., *Matrimonio: Società d'amore* (da Pio XI al Concilio Vaticano Secondo), p. 129.



wives. Therefore, this subjection comes as a part of love, not as fear. This subjection and love are really awe and reverence for his loving service. It is only for joyous giving and for becoming one body. In v. 28, we see that husbands should love their wives as their own bodies, and he who loves his wife loves himself. Christian marriage and family are signs which signify and make present a reality, namely God's unfailing love manifested once for all in Christ and made present in the Church. Vatican Council in its *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* says:

Christ our Lord has abundantly blessed this love which is rich in its various features, coming as it does from the spring of divine love and modelled on Christ's own union with the Church. Just as of old God encountered His people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Saviour, the Spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of marriage. He abides with them in order that by their mutual self-giving spouses will love each other with enduring fidelity, as He loved the Church and delivered Himself for it. Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church.<sup>153</sup>

In this sense, the covenant of love and self-giving between the spouses and in the family is better understood in the light of the covenant between Christ and the Church. Thus, marriage is a 'great mystery' which also reflects God's covenant of love with humanity, which became fully operative



christological dimension of marriage is expressed in the image of Christ the Bridegroom who delivered and offered Himself for the Church. This is the fundamental theme in the prayers of MLM, presented as a model for Christian marriage.

### 3.4.5. Christ's Incarnation (لَحْمَ فَجَا) as 'Marriage' with the Human Race

The Syriac Fathers explain the whole life of Christ such as the incarnation, baptism, the public life and death in marital terms. For them, Christ's incarnation is a 'marriage' with the human race. They symbolise His baptism as the betrothal with the Church, and His entering the public life and especially His presence in Cana are that of a Bridegroom. Finally, the Fathers consider that His death on the cross is the wedding with the Church. Here, in all these events, the true identity of Christ the Bridegroom is fully revealed. In this way, the Fathers symbolise the whole life of Christ in matrimonial terms. The Syriac Fathers also consider the whole life of Christ – incarnation, baptism, public life and death – as redemptive. They see the death of Christ as the culmination of the 'descent' in the world. Since we have already seen the other themes in this chapter, the following section particularly deals with the patristic idea of Christ's incarnation.

For the Syriac Fathers, Christ's incarnation has its own christological dimension, being an image of Christ's 'marriage' with the human race. In this sense, Christ's incarnation expresses His 'marital union' with mankind. The most common term used by the Syriac Fathers in the third and fourth centuries to describe the incarnation is that Christ 'put on the body' (لَحْمَ فَجَا - *lbâs pagrô*) or Christ 'clothed in the flesh'.



Aphrahat and Ephrem speak of the incarnation by referring to Christ clothing Himself in a body. The image 'He clothed Himself with a body' is the standard expression for the incarnation.<sup>154</sup> For them, the incarnation represents creation and the fullness of revelation. Since Adam's sin created disharmony between heaven and earth, Christ's incarnation remedies the effects of sin. Therefore, the incarnation reconciles heaven and earth, and enables human beings to share again in the divine nature. It saves them from the distorted image and darkness. Thus, for the Syriac Fathers, the incarnation became the reconciling of heaven and earth. For Ephrem, the incarnation was to heal all creatures and to restore the primitive harmony of the creation. The Syriac Fathers consider that Christ's 'putting on the body' as a source of the resurrection of mankind and the solidarity of Christ's body with our bodily nature. In this sense, for the Syriac Fathers, the most important effect of the incarnation was the reconciliation of heaven and earth.

Ephrem finds the act of 'kenosis' as the act of reconciliation. In his *hymns on the Nativity*, Ephrem states that Christ's incarnation reconciled heaven and earth, because therein the Highest came down to the lowest.<sup>155</sup> For Ephrem, besides the reconciliation, the incarnation brought about the

<sup>154</sup> EPHREM, *HFid.* 19:6; CSCO 154-55/Scr.Syr. 73-74, pp. 72-73, 57; *Sermo de Domino Nostro* 9; CSCO 270/Scr. Syr. 116, p. 8; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 73, 310-11. For the Syriac Fathers, Christ 'put on the body' is a favourite way of describing incarnation. It is frequent in Aphrahat also; cf. *Dem.* 21, 954.11; 980. 15-16; 22, 996.23; 23, 32. 8-9.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *HNat.* 3: 10; 11:6-8; CSCO 186-87/Scr.Syr. 82-83, pp. 148, 70; S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, pp. 39-41; L. LELOIR, *Doctrines et Méthodes de S. Ephrem d'après son Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant* (original syriaque et version armenienne) CSCO 220 (1961) pp. 38-39.



human sanctification and our new elevation also. Ephrem says that Christ's incarnation was to renew the image of Adam. For Ephrem, the day of Christ's birth resembles the first day of creation. This restoration of the image of God which Adam distorted through his sin, comes through the return of the 'robe of glory' (ܠܚܘܒܐ; ܠܚܘܒܐ – to put on, to clothe oneself). According to Ephrem, the Word became incarnate to heal all creatures and to restore the primitive harmony of creation.<sup>156</sup> Through the incarnation, God made visible, and it was a way to capture humans and draw them closer to God. Here, the incarnation is viewed as a close union with mankind. The Church also is considered as the unity of the human race. This idea is mentioned also in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The nuptial covenant between God and His people Israel had prepared the way for the new and everlasting covenant in which the Son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving His life, has united to Himself in a certain way all mankind saved by Him, thus preparing for 'the wedding feast of the Lamb'"<sup>157</sup>.

The Syriac Fathers consider the incarnation as Christ's 'marriage' with the human race. For them, the Word was united and joined to the whole human race. In the incarnation, Christ who is the Word took flesh, and God became man (ܡܠܘܚܘܒܐ ܠܘܚܘܒܐ).

<sup>156</sup> Cf. EPHREM, EC Syr. 14,17; S. BROCK, *The Harp of the Spirit*, Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, London, 1975, pp. 66-68; For more on the Syriac clarification, cf. J. P. SMITH, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, U.S.A., 1998, p. 235. The verb ܠܚܘܒܐ means to put on, to take, to adopt, to take possession of etc.; and the noun ܠܚܘܒܐ means vestment, garment etc.; again ܠܚܘܒܐ also means to put on; cf. also L. COSTAZ, *Dictionnaire Syriac-Français (Syriac-English Dictionary)*, Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth, 1963, p. 168.

<sup>157</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1612.



ܐܘܢܝܢܐ ܐܘܢܝܢܐ). Therefore, the Fathers consider the incarnation (ܡܬܒܫܪܘܢܝܬܐ - *metbasrônîtô*) in the sense of Christ's full union with men.<sup>158</sup> The term ܡܬܒܫܪܘܢܝܬܐ derives from ܒܫܪܐ (ܒܫܪܐ - *besrô* - flesh). The verb (ܐܬܒܫܪܐ) *etbasar* means 'to have taken flesh' or 'becoming flesh', that is to say, the incarnation. ܐܘܢܝܢܐ means to become man.<sup>159</sup> In the unity of Christ with the human race, far from suppressing human personality, he develops and strengthens it. "Marriage supposes a distinction of persons, that is why the incarnation is considered a marriage, not between the two natures of Christ, but between Christ and the Church".<sup>160</sup>

For the Syriac Fathers, the 'image of clothing' (ܠܚܡܐ) is a favourite theme for describing the incarnation. This phrase is frequent in Aphrahat, expressing as "the body which He put on from us is the origin of our resurrection".<sup>161</sup> Aphrahat in his *Demonstration* says that Jesus through His Father put on His body from the Virgin (ܐܘܢܝܢܐ ܡܬܒܫܪܘܢܝܬܐ ܡܢ ܘܪܘܠܝܢܐ).<sup>162</sup> Again Aphrahat mentions the same idea that Jesus put on His body (ܐܘܢܝܢܐ ܡܬܒܫܪܘܢܝܬܐ ܡܢ ܘܪܘܠܝܢܐ).<sup>163</sup> Ephrem refers to Christ's solidarity with the human race through his incarnation. He applies this image 'putting on clothes' to the

<sup>158</sup> Cf. J. P. SMITH, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, p. 312.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. J. P. SMITH, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, pp. 49, 56.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, p. 159.

<sup>161</sup> APHRAHAT, *Dem. XXI, PS*, pars prima, 954.11; 980.15-16; XXIII, *PS*, Pars Prima II, 32:8-9; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 69-70. The images such as clothing (incarnation), Medicine of Life (Eucharist), Tree of Life (Christ as source of Church's life) etc. are the favourites imageries of the Syriac Fathers.

<sup>162</sup> APHRAHAT, *Dem. XXI; PS*, Pars Prima, 954.11; (*Iesum autem Pater eius corpore induit de Virgine*).

<sup>163</sup> APHRAHAT, *Dem. XXI; PS*, Pars Prima, 980.15-16; (*Iesus quia corpus induit*).



God's election of the Church, and then to the incarnation and resurrection:

The assembly which preceded in time came (only) for a time;  
 It went out and was rejected and shall not return home;  
 But he that put on the Church will not strip it off.....  
 So our Lord put on the body and suffered for sins;  
 she who had angered him by the calf angered him through the thief,  
 but our Lord put on anew the body and rose again.<sup>164</sup>

Ephrem in his *hymn on Paradise*, says that by His incarnation, Christ made us one. He views the incarnation as His union with the Church, His Bride: "Blessed be he whose power came down and was made one with his churches".<sup>165</sup> 'Clothing imagery' is a frequent and favourite image in Ephrem's hymns, expressing the plan of salvation. Ephrem says that in His incarnation, Christ 'put on a body' (فَرَسَّ لَحْمًا).<sup>166</sup> Again Ephrem says that our Lord put on the body (صَدَّقَ لَحْمًا فَسَّ) for our sins and He suffered.<sup>167</sup> Considering the divinity as fire, Ephrem says, "fire entered Mary's womb, put on a body and came forth".<sup>168</sup> In order to express the theme

<sup>164</sup> EPHREM, *HEccl.* 44, 21-26; *CSCO* 198/Scr.Syr. 84, p.113; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>165</sup> *HResur.* 3: 7; *CSCO* 248-249/Scr.Syr. 108-109, pp. 86, 69; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 106. The term 'churches', here means Christ's presence in each local church.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. *HFid.* 19:7; *CSCO* 154-155/Scr.Syr. 73-74, p. 73; 57; *HNat.* 9:2; *CSCO* 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, p. 63; 55; Cf. *HcHaer.* 32:9; *CSCO* 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, p. 129; 116; *HParad.* 11:6; *CSCO* 174-175/Scr.Syr. 78-79, p. 47; 44.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. *HEccl.* 44:26; *CSCO* 198-199/Scr.Syr. 84-85, p. 113; 109; *HFid.* 19:2; *CSCO* 154-155/Scr.Syr. 73-74, p. 72; 56. Here, Ephrem says that our Lord clothed Himself again in the body and is resurrected.

<sup>168</sup> *HNat.* 3:10; *CSCO* 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, p. 148; 136.



of incarnation, he uses many favourite paradoxes like 'the Great One (*rabbâ*) who became small', 'the Rich One (*attîrâ*) who became poor', 'the Hidden One (*kasyâ*) who revealed Himself'.<sup>169</sup> In his treatise on incarnation, Ephrem covers the entire span of salvation history by employing his favourite imageries such as 'putting on' and 'taking off' clothing and by the 'robe of glory'. It indicates not only the incarnation, but also the sacraments or Mysteries. In the following hymn, Ephrem speaks of Christ's incarnation and its effects:

All these changes did the Merciful One make  
stripping of glory and putting on a body;  
for He had devised a way to reclothe Adam  
in that glory which Adam had stripped off.  
Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes, corresponding  
to Adam's leaves,  
Christ put on clothes, instead of Adam's skins;  
He was baptized for Adam's sin,  
His body was embalmed for Adam's death  
He rose and raised up Adam in his glory.  
Blessed is he who descended, put Adam on and  
ascended.<sup>170</sup>

Jacob of Serugh says that the Bridegroom came down through the incarnation and received the bride. The manger at Bethlehem became the 'nuptial chamber' for the heavenly Bridegroom to unite Himself to the human race. Jacob sees

<sup>169</sup> Cf. *HNat.* 11:6-8; *CSCO* 186-187/*Scr.Syr.* 82-83, p. 70; 62. Here, Ephrem sees Christ's mother as a wonder because of His incarnation. Ephrem says that the Creator of everything, though He was rich, He became a poor; though He was high in everything, He humbled Himself etc. In this way, Ephrem uses many paradoxes to express the greatness of incarnation.

<sup>170</sup> *HNat.* 23:13; *CSCO* 186-187/*Scr.Syr.* 82-83, p. 120; 109.



three focal points in Christ's incarnation. He considers incarnation as three 'wombs' or staging posts: the Mary's womb, the womb of Jordan, and the womb of the Sheol. Jacob says that Christ's dwelling in Mary's womb precedes, in historical time, His dwelling in that of the Jordan or Sheol. In this sense, he says that Christian baptism has its origin in two quite different moments in the course of the incarnation – Christ's baptism in the Jordan and the piercing of His side on the cross. Jacob says: "He completed his whole course by three staging posts: He resided in the virgin and came to birth, though He was God; again baptism received him, and yet he was God; and He descended to Sheol, and the world recognized that he was God".<sup>171</sup>

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed some patristic images under the main image 'Christ as the Bridegroom' reflected in MLM. The title 'Bridegroom' is typically biblical and this image shows the intimate relation between God and His people which is presented in conjugal experience and terms in the Old Testament. In this sense, the covenant made between God and Israel itself had a nuptial character. But in the New Testament,

<sup>171</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, p. 593 ; G. OLINDER (ed.) *Iacobi Sarugensis Epistulae quotquot supersunt*, CSCO 110/Scr.Syr 57, p. 263; cf. S. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 326; S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, p. 46. According to Jacob of Serugh, Christian baptism has its origin in two different moments of the incarnation, i.e. Christ's baptism in the Jordan and the piercing of His side on the cross. He uses the term 'schema' to describe the incarnation. For him, it represents a manner or mode of existence. He is of opinion that Christ is God by nature, but in the image and schema of a human. He came to dwell in the womb of Mary in the form of a man.



Christ is pictured as the 'Bridegroom' of the new covenant (Mt 9:15; Jn 3:29; Mt 25:10). It expresses a deep relationship between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. This conjugal symbolism is seen in the 'marriage' of Christ with the Church. As a true Bridegroom, Christ delivers and offers Himself for the Church His Bride. This image expresses the christological dimension of marriage. Here, the conjugal symbolism is spiritualised in the sense of His marriage with the Church. The model of the betrothed couple exists as a reality in the covenant of God with men which has become a nuptial mystery through Christ, the Bridegroom.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE: A 'LOCUS ECCLESIOLOGICUS'

### Introduction

Ecclesiology is the doctrine or theology about the Church. The concept 'Church' has the connotation of universality in the *Didache*. In the Greek world, the word *Ekklesia*, of which *church* is an equivalent translation, refers to the assembly of the people (*demos*) especially in a profane sense. But Paul gives it a religious sense with a meaning of the Christian assembly united 'in church' (I Cor 11:18).<sup>1</sup> The word *Ekklesia* means not only the congregation of the believers assembled for the prayer, but also the new people or the new race of Christians who are established in God's Kingdom. The symbol of this unity is the Eucharistic bread which becomes one bread from a multitude of grains. For Clement of Alexandria, there is only one universal Church, as there is

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. X. LEON-DUFOUR (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 58. The choice of *ekklesia* by the LXX was influenced by the assonance *qâhâl* (reunion) *ekklesia*. The word *ekklēsia* comes *ekkaleô* (I call from or I convoke) which indicates that Israel, the people of God, was the assembly of men convoked by divine initiative. For more on the Church in the Gospels, the Church in Peter, the Church in the Acts of the Apostles etc., cf. A. VACANT "Église", *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Tome 2, F. VIGOUROUX et al., (eds.), Paris, 1899, pp. 1599-1601; G. H. JOYCE, "The Church", C. G. HERBERMANN, et al. (eds.) *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, The Encyclopedia Press, New York, 1913, 744-61.



only one God the Father, one divine Word and one Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Church is the virgin mother who feeds her children with the milk of the divine Word.<sup>2</sup> Cyprian also emphasises the importance of the Church as mother: "He cannot have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother".<sup>3</sup> Didymus the Blind also calls the Church, the bride of Christ, and the mother.<sup>4</sup> The personification of the Church as the bride of Christ and other symbolical titles are a part of the New Testament heritage. They are very close to the New Testament use of such images (cf. 2 Cor 11:2) which are pregnant with ecclesiological doctrine.

The systematic treatise on ecclesiology came towards the end of the middle ages. Though there appeared some formation of the treatise unofficially even in the first centuries by the Fathers, the *De regimine christiano* of James of Viterbo (ca. 1301) and the *Summa de ecclesia* of John of Torquemada (1468) of the middle ages are considered important treatises on the Church, However, it reached the culmination at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the twentieth century has

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Paedagogus*, I, ch. 6: 42; PG 8, 286; cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology: The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus*, vol. II, Spectrum Publishers, Utrecht Brussels, 1980, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> CYPRIAN, *De unitate Ecclesiae* 6, PL 4, 503, "Habere jam non potest Deum patrem, qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem"

<sup>4</sup> Cf. DIDYMUS, *De Trinitate* 2: 6, 23, PG 39, 507; *Expositio in Psalmos*, PG 39, 1369 AB, 1372 A, 1465 C; *In Proverbia*, PG 39, 1624 C; cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*, vol. III, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> If we understand ecclesiology to mean doctrine or theology about the Church, then already in the New Testament there is ecclesiology (NT Ecclesiologies). Likewise, we find ecclesiology from the time of the *Didache*, the letters of Ignatius etc. Unfortunately, a fertile patristic



witnessed an enormous interest in the theology of the Church. Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (1943) gave a new orientation to ecclesiology. It revived the idea of communion in the unity of Christians with Christ, and with each other within the Church. The forerunner of this encyclical is the *De Ecclesia Christi* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ) of the Vatican I (1870). The climax of this ecclesial interest is the Second Vatican Council especially two of its documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. We have to add besides these two documents, the encyclical of Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam*. Vatican II is very much interested in presenting an up-to-date image of the Church's identity and mission in this world. Being fully aware of the mystery and the identity of the Church, the Council employed many biblical images and symbols from the patristic literature which portray the mystery and mission of the Church. In this way, the study

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like M. Scheeben, M. Schmaus, Y. Congar, A. Dulles have a profound ecclesiology in various places of their works. Vatican I calls the Church as the *societas perfecta* which contains within itself all that is necessary to achieve its finality. *Mystici Corporis* (1943) of Pius XII integrates the vision of the Church with the Pauline doctrine of the Body of Christ. Later, Vatican II calls the Church, the People of God (LG 13), Body of Christ (LG 7, 14, 48; AA 2; AG 6), temple of the Holy Spirit (LG 17; AG 7). The idea of communion or *koinônia* is also very central to Vat. II ecclesiology; cf. C. O'DONNELL, *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church*, A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1996, pp. 140-43. For more on the ecclesiology of the non-Syriac Fathers especially Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Hermas, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian etc. cf. K. RAHNER, *Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, Band 3, A. R. BATLOGG, et.al. (eds.), pp. 39-47. Here, we find the following themes: Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is His bride; matrimonial bond of the 'spiritual marriage' between Christ and the Church, the bride of Christ generates the children of God; the Church is born from the pierced side of Christ; the baptism of Christ as betrothal, and His death on the cross as marriage and so on.



of ecclesiology is an effort to rediscover the 'essence of the Church' and the 'mysteric' reality of the Church. LG 6 lists many images found in Scripture including the image of Church as Christ's spouse. The bridal image of the Church is highly emphasised here in the biblical background. Church is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb (cf. Rev 19:7; 21:2; 22:17). "It is she whom Christ 'loved and for whom He delivered Himself up...' (Eph 5:26). It is she whom He unites to Himself by an unbreakable alliance, and whom He constantly 'nourishes and cherishes' (Eph 5:29). It is she whom, once purified, he willed to be joined to Himself, subject in love and fidelity (Eph 5:24)".<sup>6</sup>

The development of ecclesiology of the Syriac Churches has its own history and was influenced by external and internal factors and events. The liturgical prayers express the ecclesiology of the Syriac tradition, and give a better understanding of the Oriental or Syriac theology. We find that the Syriac theology has its own cultural and liturgical background.<sup>7</sup> The liturgy incorporated the theological thought of the Syriac writers of that time such as Aphrahat and Ephrem who arose from the milieu of Judeo-Christianity. Since they both arose from the milieu of Judeo-Christianity, their thoughts also were influenced by it. As an exegete, Ephrem seems to be

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<sup>6</sup> LG 6, AAS 57 (1965) 8-9; A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, St. Paul Publications, Bombay, 1975, pp. 326-27.

<sup>7</sup> The Syriac liturgical tradition holds a pride of place in the Oriental Christian Churches, since it is heir to the Semitic world out of which Christianity sprang. Still today, the Syriac Churches employ their liturgical language, Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic, the very language of Jesus.



influenced by a midrashic<sup>8</sup> approach and Jewish hermeneutical practice. The theological thoughts and insights of Aphrahat, Ephrem, and of their immediate successors like Jacob of Serugh inherent in the Malankara liturgy provide us with an adequate understanding of the theological origins of the West-Syrian or Antiochene tradition. Though their writings themselves are not intended to be a perfect systematisation, they expressed their theological thoughts through symbols, images and paradox. Their theology was fundamentally biblical in inspiration and expression, and the Syriac churches still cherish this patristic heritage.

#### 4.1. *THE CHURCH (ܩܘܪܝܘܢ) IN THE SYRIAC TRADITION*

According to the Syriac tradition, the Church is betrothed by Christ at His baptism in the river Jordan and is wedded to Christ on the cross. The mysteries of 'initiation' by which members of the Church are incorporated and nourished represent the blood and water shed from the side of Christ on the cross.<sup>9</sup> The Church is the great Christian community instituted by Christ in the place of the Synagogue. For the Syriac Fathers, the Church is the *re-found Paradise*, the Body of Christ, the holy and immaculate spouse and so on. The Fathers see the Church as the new people of God, prefigured by and replacing the former people. Expressing the title, Church as the 'people of God', Fathers express the nature of

<sup>8</sup> *Midrash* = the discovery of meanings other than literal in the Bible, derives from the root *darash* (inquire), denotes the literature that interprets Scripture in order to extract its full implications and meaning; cf. R. J. Z. WERBLOWSKY & G. WIGODER (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, p. 463.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, p. 79.



the Church. They conceived the Church as a 'corporate personality' in relation to the Incarnate Christ.<sup>10</sup> Ephrem relates Christ's body to the Church.<sup>11</sup> He develops the image of Church as mother in the sense that both Mary and the Church are viewed as the second Eve. In this sense, the Syriac tradition presents the mystery of the Church through various symbols and images.

In the Syriac writings, we find the prominent idea that God has rejected the chosen people of the Old Testament in favour of the 'Church of the nations'. We find especially in Aphrahat and Ephrem the idea that the chosen people have been replaced by a 'new people', the 'nation from the nations', the Church of the Gentiles. For Aphrahat, God promised to extend His salvation through Abraham which is very clear in the following words, 'thy name shall not be called Abram, but Abraham shall be thy name, because I have made thee father for a multitude of nations'.<sup>12</sup> In his *Hymn on the Unleavened Bread*, Ephrem says that the type was in Egypt, the reality in the Church; the reward will be in the kingdom.<sup>13</sup> The Syriac liturgies compare the union of Christ with His Church to the union of the couples in Christian marriage. The Malankara liturgy of marriage reflects the same theme and a developed

<sup>10</sup> Cf. APHRAHT, *Dem.* 21, PS, Pars prima I, 976. 13-15.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *HFid.* 10, 7-8; CSCO 154-55/Scr.Syr. 73-74, p. 50; *HcHaer.* 42, 2-5; CSCO 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, pp. 168-69. Fathers are of opinion that Christ has joined to us Himself by taking a body. Here, Christ's body is symbolised as a garment He put on which is a source of salvation to all men.

<sup>12</sup> APHRAHAT, *Dem.* 11, PS, Pars prima I, 468:1-7. Aphrahat and Ephrem are very different in their approach to the history of salvation which shows their different aims in writing. Aphrahat lived among the Jews, in the Persian empire where Christians were less, while Ephrem lived within the Roman Empire where the Jews were a persecuted nation.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *HAzym.* 5:23, CSCO 248-249/Scr.Syr. 108-109, pp. 12, 11.



theology of the Church. This is reflected in its prayers and hymns. As we have already seen, the theme of the betrothal of the Church with Christ at the Jordan, the wedding of the Church with Christ on the cross, Christ's blood as dowry to the Church, Christ's eternal love and union with the Church etc. are well expressed in the Malankara liturgy of marriage.

#### 4.1.1. Ecclesiology of the Syriac Tradition

Though it is difficult to pin-point the exact moment of the foundation of the Church, the Syriac tradition<sup>14</sup> considers 'foundation stones' in the baptism of Christ at Jordan, the Last Supper of Christ with the apostles and on the cross. The foundation of the Church was also established in the mandate given to the apostles to preach the Good News and to baptize the people (Mt 28:19).<sup>15</sup> The ecclesiology of the early Syriac tradition is very close to Scripture and can largely be traced to it. The use of symbols and images of the Church in Syriac tradition is devotional, liturgical and theological.

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<sup>14</sup> In the history of Christianity, Christian tradition has been mainly divided into the two main strands of the Latin West and the Greek East, which is reflected in Pope John Paul II's use of the metaphor of the 'two lungs' which the Church needs to breathe. But it is to be considered also the existence of the Oriental Syrian Churches (Syriac tradition) which constitute an important third stream of Christian tradition, quite distinct from the above two main strands. Sebastian Brock suggests the Syriac Orient as the 'third lung' for the Church. Because of the important reasons such as the Aramaic speaking Christianity, strong links with the Jewish traditions, use of biblical imagery, use of poetry as a vehicle for theology, monastic traditions and its christological tradition, the Syriac Orient can be considered as the 'third lung' for the Church. cf. S. P. BROCK, "The Syriac Orient: a Third 'Lung' for the Church?", the Note of the Conference 'Donohue Chair', PIO, 25 March 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *HVirg.* 5: 9-10; CSCO 223-224/Scr. Syr. 94-95, p. 19; Here Christ purified and washed away her sinfulness and filth to be made her holy, and to make her His bride; cf. G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition", *SEERICC-6*, pp. 11-12.



The ecclesiology of the Syriac Fathers comes through the use of typological comparisons or symbolic titles applied to Christ and the Church.<sup>16</sup> According to the Syriac Fathers, the whole of Scripture speaks of Christ and His Church. They symbolize the Church through biblical images such as the People of God, Body of Christ, Temple, Spouse, Flock, Kingdom, Field, Net and so on. In this sense, these images are essentially ecclesial, as typifying the Church.<sup>17</sup> Both Aphrahat and Ephrem symbolize the Church as the Nation and the Nations, Body of Christ, Vineyard, Bride and Mother, Rock and the House on the Rock. They express their thoughts on the Church entirely through typology and imagery. The early writers, such as the authors of the *Odes of Solomon* and the *Didache*, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin the Martyr, Clement of

<sup>16</sup> The Syriac Fathers expressed their thoughts on the Church through typology and imagery. Though we cannot look for a systematic ecclesiology in the 4<sup>th</sup> century Syriac Fathers, as we now understand in the Western treatise (in the west also it is of a late development), their themes of Christ and the Church such as the Church as 'the Nation from the Nations' (the Church of the gentiles), the Church as the New People of God, Church as Christ's Body, Church as Christ's Bride etc. implicitly include the content of ecclesiology.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. APHRAHAT, *Dem.* 14, PS, pars prima I, 681-684; *Dem.* 14, PS, pars prima I, 573, 3; 681, 3-4. His ecclesiological thoughts are very clear in *Dem.* 14 where he uses a number of titles of Christ and the Church. Aphrahat sees the Church as the house of faith, and makes the figure of the Church as the house on the rock (*Dem.* 1:5). In this figure, he sees the Church as the structure of faith, founded on Christ the Rock. Again, he sees Church as the place of indwelling of Christ (*Dem.* 1. 8-25); Church as founded on charity (*Dem.* 2, 81), Church as the vineyard (*Dem.* 2, 96. 9-10; *Dem.* 6, 244.13-20) in which he expresses the idea of our incorporation and union with Christ. Ephrem's *Hymnen de Ecclesia* gives his beautiful ecclesiological vision (cf. *HEccl.* 44. 21-26; CSCO 198-199/Scr.Syr. 84-85, p. 113). Marriage of Christ and the Church is a frequent theme in Ephrem's hymns. He sees the Church as the bride of Christ; cf. *CNis.* 32, 16; CSCO 218-219/Scr.Syr. 92-93, p. 78; *HVirg.* 19, 2; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 64; Cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp.131-238; The symbolic titles Mother, Bride, Body of Christ, etc. attributed to the Church by the Fathers express the Church's vital union with Christ and her particular role and nature.



Alexandria also used symbols as a primary mode of catechesis for the rites of initiation, as an explanation of membership in the Church and for the meaning of salvation in Christ.

#### 4.1.2. The Concept of the Church in the West Syrian Liturgical Tradition

The Syriac liturgies are noted for their use of religious poetical style. Many prominent Syriac Fathers are well-known in this area and many of the excerpts from their works are used still in the liturgical books of the Churches of the Antiochene, Chaldean, Maronite tradition and so on. Malankara liturgy includes many excerpts from the Syriac Fathers. The West-Syrian liturgy is a monument of love and enthusiasm of the Syrians for the Holy Church, the Bride of Christ. It is well-expressed in its liturgy of the Consecration of the Church, Dedication of the Church, Epiphany, baptism, ordination and marriage services. The sources for this liturgy are mainly from Aphrahat, Ephrem, Severus of Antioch, Philexenus of Mabbug, Jacob of Edessa, Jacob of Serugh, Dionysius Bar Salibi and Bar Hebraeus. The commentaries on the liturgy by bishop George of the Arabs, Moses bar Kepha, Bar Hebraeus, and the collections of canons contribute much to the rich West Syrian tradition.<sup>18</sup> We find the essence of the

<sup>18</sup> Many of the prayers expressing the West-Syrian love and affection for the Church are included in the liturgical prayers of the West-Syrian churches. We find many evidences for this in the following documents: (1) Jacob of Serugh, *de Resurrectione Domini*, Hom. 72; Cod. Vat. (Syr.) 118, p. 296; *de Inter. Christ et Revel. Petri*, Hom. XXIV, Cod. Vat. (Syr.) 460, p. 181, 182; Hom. *de Transfig. Domini*, Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 177, p. 538; (2) Moses Bar Kepha, *de Cerem. Ordi.* In Jn 21:15-17, Cod. de Prop. Sharfian (Syr.), p.184; *de Dedicat. Ecclesia*, Hom. 1, Cod. Vat., 159, p. 314; *de Sacerdotio*, Cod. De Prop. Sharfian (Syr.), p. 103, 124; (3) Dionysius Bar Salibi, *Commentary in John*, Cod. Vat.



Church and the genuine ecclesiology in these liturgical sources. The Church is often praised in the hymns and prayers with rich language of symbols and images. For example, we find the image of the Church as the bride of Christ who is united by most ardent love to her celestial Spouse, and adorned by Him with all the imperishable ornaments.

The Syriac tradition considers the Church as not only the source of the mysteries, but as a sacrament of the union of Christ with His people.<sup>19</sup> The West Syrian liturgy expresses the mystical union of Christ and His Church which is imaged in the marriage of the earthly spouses. Christ bought His bride the Church, by sacrificing His own life on the cross at Calvary. In this way, the decisive moment of Christ's marriage with the Church is at the Crucifixion. Moses Bar Kepha in his commentary says that the Holy Church was formed from the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ. In the West Syrian liturgy, Christ's baptism at the Jordan is compared

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(Syr.), 239, p. 260; *Comment. In Lucam*, Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 288, p. 217; *Comment in 4 Evang.*, Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 155, p. 102; (4) Bar Hebraeus, *Thesaurus Mysteriorum*, in Luke 22:24, Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 282, p. 197; in *Chronic.*; Cod. Vat. (Syr.) 166, p. 247; G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition", *SEERICC-6*, pp. 53-60. Here, in all these prayers and commentaries, we find a lot of beautiful concepts on the Church in the Syriac tradition.

<sup>19</sup> The period before 5th century is considered common to both Syriac traditions – West and East in which we find the most important personalities of this period – Aphrahat and Ephrem. From the 5th century onwards, the Syriac tradition came to be increasingly influenced by Greek thoughts. In the 7th century, it reached its climax. During this period, the theologians of the Syriac churches systematized the theology, they had inherited from the Greek world. In the 13th century, Bar Hebraeus wrote his *Summa Theologica*, basing on the Aristotelian tradition. Thus, Syriac Christianity comprises of two distinct poles – Semitic and Hellenistic; cf. G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition", *SEERICC-6*, pp. 7-8.



to His betrothal with the Church, and their engagement is consecrated by John the Baptist. The Church is perfectly beautiful, without stain and adorned with inconceivable brightness, after the purification by the celestial Spouse. This theme is well expressed in different parts of the West-Syrian liturgy. Christ paid a sublime price as the dowry for His Spouse on the cross, and He still gives the gift of His body and blood in the Holy Eucharist. The Church is, thus, united to her celestial Spouse by love and intimacy. We have already seen many of these themes in the previous chapters of the thesis. Thus, the West Syrian liturgy of marriage presents the 'marital' union of Christ and the Church in which Christ the heavenly Bridegroom prepares the nuptial chamber for His bride. The nuptial chamber is compared here to heaven, and the Bridegroom invites her to enter there. The image 'Church as the bride of Christ' is presented in the liturgy with great love. Again, the West Syrian liturgy presents the Church as mother. Through baptism, men are born to a new life as the children of the mother-Church who effects in them the remission of sins and redemption.

The image 'Church as the mystical body of Christ' is also mentioned, though rarely, in the West Syrian liturgy. The biblical passages refer to this image, and Christ is pictured as the Head of the whole body of the Church. The West Syrian liturgy often mentions that the Holy Spirit resides in the Church and adorns her with his gifts, assists her, and teaches the true faith. Since she is the bride of the second person of the Blessed Trinity, she is very close to all the three persons. This is also often expressed in the liturgy, especially in the form of doxology at the end of the prayers. In all these ways, the West Syrian tradition has a special love for the Church and it expresses the essence of the Church in its liturgical prayers.



In the West Syrian tradition many allegories are used for the Church. The Syriac Fathers like Ephrem, Aphrahat began the way for such allegorical, metaphorical and symbolical use in the liturgical prayers and the scriptural interpretations typical of the Syrian attitude. They like to discover figures and symbols of the Church everywhere, and it is a proof for their emphasis on and devotion to the Church. For example, the Church is represented and prefigured as the bride, body, mother etc. Fr. de Vries says, "If the Church is the bride of Christ, then she is the mother of those to whom Christ, by His death, has brought eternal life. The West Syrian liturgy gives the name of 'mother' to the Church rather rarely; but it very often mentions the 'children of the Church.'"<sup>20</sup> Aphrahat calls Christians the children of the Church.<sup>21</sup> In the Malankara marriage liturgy also, during the blessing of the rings, this idea of the 'children of the Church' is mentioned in the priest's prayer, "For the fulfilment of the gladness of the children of the Holy Church, these rings are being blessed...."<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.1.3. Ecclesial Images Expressed in the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage

Malankara liturgy of marriage has various ecclesial images other than the key image 'Church as bride of Christ'. Before entering into the bridal image of the Church, let us

<sup>20</sup> W. de VRIES, "La Conception de l'Église chez les Syriens séparés de Rome", *Oriente Syrien* 2 (1957) 111-24; Paul in Gal 4:26 speaks of the Church as the Mother of new lives, and we are the children of this Mother, Church; cf. A. R. BATLOGG, et. al. (eds.) *Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, Band 3, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. APHRAHAT, *Dem.* 14, 573.3, 9; 681. 3-4; 18, 841.5-6; 22, 1040.22. The *Liber Graduum* also depicts the Church as a mother rearing children for the Church in heaven; cf. *Liber Graduum* XXX, PS III, 885. 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> MLM 53; ET 241; ST 38.



examine these ecclesial images such as the Church as swallow, garden and moon that mentioned in MLM. These images also express the essence and various aspects of the Church.

#### 4.1.3.1. The Church as the Swallow

The Church is identified as swallow in the prayer of MLM. "The Church on account of her praises, is similar to the swallow because she rises early and sings glory to God the most high. She holds in her hands David's harps and sings her hymns together with the heavenly angels. With a lyre of hundred and fifty strings she sings glory to God that He may shower His mercies upon the entire world".<sup>23</sup> We find some biblical background for this image. In Ps 84: 3, we find, "Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at the altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God". This passage alludes to other Old Testament texts also: "In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to me, 'Flee like a bird to the mountains'" (Ps 11:1); "O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice..." (Song of Solomon 2:14); "Be like the dove that nests in the sides of the mouth of a gorge" (Jer 48:28). In all these passages, the Church is likened and identified to a swallow or dove. Ephrem in his *Hymns on Virginit*y says, "Blessed are you Heavenly Bird whose nest is the cross of light, and you did not want to make the nest on earth lest the serpent come and destroy your young"<sup>24</sup>. In order

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<sup>23</sup> MLM 68; ET 249; ST 51-52.

<sup>24</sup> EPHREM, *HVirg.* 24, 3; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, pp. 85, 75-76; Though Ephrem is dealing here with the state of virginity, yet the passage from virginity to the Church could easily be made because both themes are often linked together in the Syriac tradition. It has also an allusion to the reference in Is 60:8 which mentions of flying like doves.



to express the motherhood of the Church, Ephrem compares the local Church of Edessa with the hen who gathers her chickens under her strong wings. "To Jerusalem thou didst say that thou wouldst gather her as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Lord, let thy truth gather thy children under my wings".<sup>25</sup> In all these biblical and patristic background, MLM expresses the image of the Church as a swallow or bird always sings glory to God. She sings and glorifies God with the harp of David, and she sings glory with the angels so that God may shower His mercies upon the whole world.

#### 4.1.3.2. The Church as the Garden

The image of the Church as a garden is also found in MLM. "You are the Young One who betrothed me, the One who planted Eden. May the sweet wind which passes from Your garden (صَفْحُ حَيْسِر) refreshes me".<sup>26</sup> The Syriac Fathers often compare the Church with the garden. We find many patristic references for this image mentioned in MLM. Ephrem in his *hymn on Virginity*, talks about the garden of Eden. "In the garden of Eden and the terrestrial world our Lord's symbols multiply themselves".<sup>27</sup> Ephrem thinks that God planted the garden in Paradise for the delight of the Church: "He planted this Paradise, adorned it without effort .... The Creator saw the Church and was pleased; He resided in that Paradise, which she had planted for His honour, just as He had planted the Garden for her delight".<sup>28</sup> Ephrem in his *Hymn on Paradise*

<sup>25</sup> *CNis* 29; CSCO 218-219/Scr.Syr. 92-93, pp. 64-65.

<sup>26</sup> MLM 78; ET 255; ST 61.

<sup>27</sup> *HVirg.* 5; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> EPHREM, *HParad.*, 6, 10; CSCO 174-175/Scr.Syr. 78-79, p. 21; cf. S. P. BROCK, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymn on Paradise*, St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York, 1990, p. 112. Here, etymologically, garden is understood as the paradise, and consequently, the Church is symbolised as the garden which is adorned by God.



symbolises the Church as the pure garden planted by Christ Himself. "He planted the garden most fair, He built the Church most pure".<sup>29</sup> Here, the Church is closely connected with paradise. In this manner, the theme of paradise is symbolically anticipated in the Church. The paradise imagery is related to the features of the Church. Ephrem mentions the qualities needed for entering into the garden which is the Church. "Those who have caused dissension shall not enter that garden of peace. This Church of truth is the likeness of that kingdom, so in holy Church there ought to be agreement".<sup>30</sup> Ephrem symbolises the Church as the garden of life:

The mystery of the levels of that garden of life  
 He prefigured in the Ark and at Mount Sinai  
 Symbols of paradise and its disposition He has depicted  
 for us;  
 Established fair and desirable in every way,  
 In its height and its beauty, in its fragrance and variety.  
 It is the haven of all riches, in it the Church is symbolised.<sup>31</sup>

In his *Diatessaron Commentary*, he says, "Those who have acknowledged the true kingdom enter the garden of delight according to His promises".<sup>32</sup> In all these hymns,

<sup>29</sup> EPHREM, *HParad.*, 6, 7; CSCO 174-175/Scr.Syr. 78-79, p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> EPHREM, *SFid.* 6, 315-30; CSCO 212/Scr.Syr. 88, p. 48; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 244.

<sup>31</sup> *HParad.* 2, 13; CSCO 174-175/Scr.Syr. 78-79, p. 8; R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 258.

<sup>32</sup> *EC* 20, 22; CSCO 137, *Arm.* 1, pp. 296-97. Parallel to the garden image, the Syriac Fathers symbolise the Church as the vineyard. This biblical image found in the Syriac tradition expresses the need of our vital incorporation in Christ (cf. the figure of vine in Jn 15) which is equivalent to the Pauline Body figure. Aphrahat mentions about this vineyard image as "let us be diligent workmen, that we may claim our reward with the earliest... let us not be idle workers, for see, our Lord has hired us for His vineyard"; cf. *Dem.* 6, 244. 13-20. Ephrem also comments on it, "May the vineyard of my Beloved find peace through thee, it yielded wild grapes ... May its fruits reconcile the Lord of the vineyard"; cf. *HNat.* 8: 8-9; CSCO 16-187/Scr. Syr. 82-83, p. 95.



Ephrem symbolises the Church as a most fair garden, the garden of paradise, a garden of delight, a garden of peace, a garden of life, a garden of riches and so on. Again Ephrem compares in his *Sermon on the Passion* week, Christ as the Gardener (ܩܢܘܢܐ - *gânônô*) of this garden. The following are the important ideas in this Sermon: Jesus stands and appears like a Gardener to Mary Magdalene (Jn 19:15); .... exteriorly He resembles the Gardener and interiorly He is God; ... He showed us a symbol of the Church in the image of garden and Himself as the Gardener. That is why, the Risen Lord showed Himself first to Mary who is the symbol of the Church. Ephrem says that it is for the sake of the Church that Mary saw Him as the Gardener.<sup>33</sup> Here, Mary Magdalene is seen as the type of the Church. "Mary who saw Him is a type of the Church, which first is to see the sign of His coming".<sup>34</sup> Ephrem sees the Virgin Mary also as the symbol of the Church. "There was Mary whom I saw therein, her pure conception; there was the Church, and the Son within her; a likeness of that cloud which carried Him; symbol of heaven from whence streams forth His glorious radiance".<sup>35</sup> The *Liber Graduum* symbolises Christ as the Tree

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ephrem's Commentary on Jn. XX. 11-16, in E. BECK, *Ephraem Syrus Sermones in Bebdomodam Sanctam*, CSCO 181 (1979) pp. 126-30; The Syriac word 'ܩܢܘܢܐ' (gardener) is found in Jn. 20:15 in the narration of Christ's resurrection. In the West-Syrian Easter liturgy, it is mentioned in the hymn sung during the procession: "O, Mary, I am the Gardener (*ganono*) and the 'great planter' (*nosubo raabo*) of Paradise;



of Life in His garden, and He gives life to all by the fruits from His garden. "The good tree is there in that world of light, invisible to the eyes of flesh, our Lord Jesus; He is the Tree of Life, giving life to all things by His fruits".<sup>36</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa, in the beginning of his tenth *homily on the Canticum Canticorum*, also has developed the image of the garden. For him, the Church is an enclosed garden which is well-guarded, and the different flowers and fruits of this garden are the different virtues. The 'living water' flows forth from God. The bride, the Church, becomes a 'reservoir' (fountain) of that living water which is ever living and fresh. She herself calls out to the Holy Spirit to come and stir up the perfumes of her garden. The good odour is Christ's doctrine that flows forth from the Gospels and Paul. In his description of the Church as a garden, the bride invites the Lord to come down and eat of its fruits. Here, the Church is like a well-irrigated garden which is fruitful and fragrant.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.1.3.3. The Church as the Moon

In the Malankara liturgy of marriage, the Church is symbolized also as the moon. "The Church depicts Christ as the Great Sun of justice when she saw Him on the venerable wood of the Cross. Then she like a moon (أَمْرٌ مَّعْتَبَرٌ) rose up crying glory to the power of His divinity".<sup>38</sup> MLM expresses

up from the grave to a woman (Mary Magdalene) He showed His resurrection. Mary received Him by conception, and saw an angel before her; and Mary (Magdalene) received Him in life and saw angels at His grave ... Again Mary is like the Church". T. J., LAMY (ed.), *S. Ephraemi Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 1, H. Dessain, Mechliniae, 1882, pp. 531-33 ; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 147.

<sup>36</sup> *LIBER GRADUUM*, 21, PS III, 589.3-6; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p. 129.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, In *Canticum Canticorum*, PG 44, 980-82; Cf. J. M. SHEA, *The Church: According to St. Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles*, pp. 83-89.

<sup>38</sup> MLM 73; ET 252; ST 57.



the idea that Church like a moon, receives light from Christ the Sun, gives it to all the people who are in the darkness of the world. It is through the Church the moon, the faithful receive the light and life of Christ. She receives the light from Christ the Sun which expresses the mission of the Church to give light in the darkness of the earth. The Fathers would have been probably influenced by the idea in Genesis, "God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen 1:16). The Syriac Fathers and writers often mention Christ as the Sun and the Church as the moon which is adorned with light, brightness and beauty.<sup>39</sup> The Fathers symbolize the Church as the moon receiving the light directly from Christ the Sun. The Church transmits the life and light of Christ to the world. Just as the moon receives everything from the Sun, the Church also receives the light from Christ the Sun. In the council of Nicea, the Fathers made a typological reference to the Church as moon. They expressed their view in such a way that like the moon, she shines with the true teaching of our Saviour and Life-giver Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup> Thomas Aquinas also comments on this idea: "The moon draws her light from the sun, and the Church is beautiful like the moon because she takes her light from Christ her Spouse, and shines with His grace".<sup>41</sup> Origen treats the same theme

<sup>39</sup> Cf. NARSAI, *Homily for the Feast day of Ascension*, PO, Tom. 40, Fasc. 1, No. 182, p. 183; cf. also JACOB OF SERUGH, *Six Homéliees Festales en Prose*, PO 43, Fasc. 4, No. 196, p. 544. This symbolism establishes the function of the Church in the world in her relation to Christ. It emphasises the importance and presence of the Church in the world. It consists in receiving the light from Christ and giving it to her children.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. F. MARUTHA, *History of the Council of Nicea*, (Syriac Text) mss. Vat. Syr. Borg. 82, f. 12; O. BRAUN (trans.), *De Sancta Nicaena Synodo*, Schöningh, Münster, 1898, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> AQUINAS, *Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles* 6, 9; R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, p. 63.



beautifully by commenting that we have two lights which enlighten us, namely, Christ and His Church. He says: "And just as the moon is said to receive her light from the sun, so as to enlighten the night, so the Church, which receives her light from Christ, enlightens all those who are in darkness, as Christ told His disciples saying: "You are the light of the world' (Mt 5:14)".<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.2. THE KEY IMAGE 'CHURCH AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST' (صَلَاةٌ، صَمْسًا)

The personification of the Church as the bride of Christ is a part of the New Testament heritage. Christ prepares the Church as a bride and marries her; therefore, the bride of this marriage is also prepared and presented to her husband.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the image of bride has two important meanings: the Church is loved by Christ as His bride, and, the Church plays the role of a bride. To this union between Christ and the Church, Paul applies the first words used by God to the first married couple, Adam and Eve (Gen 2: 24; Eph 5:31-32). The Fathers of the

<sup>42</sup> ORIGEN, *In Genesim*, 1: 5-6, PG 12, 150-51; R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, p. 163. In the Greek mentality, the image of moon has its own mystery. Under the symbolic aspect of the Christian mystery of the Sun, the image of the moon also is very relevant; cf. H. RAHNER, *Miti greci nell'interpretazione cristiana*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1980, pp. 162-77.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. W. S. KENNETH, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, p. 16; cf. also E. A. BONOMO, *La chiesa sposa e le doti in Ottato Milevitano*, Tip. Artig., Pallotti, Roma, 1943, pp. 5-11. For more on the Church as the Spouse of Christ, the spousal metaphor in the Scripture and Tradition, the Church, New Eve formed on the Cross etc.; cf. I. J. MARCELIC, *Ecclesia sponsa apud S. Ambrosium*, Pontificia Universita Lateranense, Roma, 1967, pp. 31-47; 67-78. In the Old Testament, we find the title 'bride' to Israel. The title 'bride of Christ' is relevant when it is understood Christ as the Bridegroom, cf. E. BELLINI, "Sponsa Christi", *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, G. PELLICCIA, G. ROCCA (eds.), vol. 9, Edizione Paoline, Roma, 1997, pp. 74-81.



Church commented on these passages of Genesis and Ephesians as of the union of Christ and the Church. The Fathers are of opinion that Christ also left His Father by descending to earth through the Incarnation, and He left His Mother by abandoning the Synagogue in order to unite Himself with the Church. Christ wants to reach us through the visible mediation of the Church, His bride. For this, He gives us faith through the Word of the Church, He gives us life through the sacraments, and He educates us in faith and divine life through the pastoral activity of the Church.<sup>44</sup> This role of Christ in the Church expresses the intimate and indissoluble union between Christ and the Church. As we have already seen, for the Syriac Fathers, the Church is betrothed as the bride of Christ in the Jordan, wedded to Him on the cross where her dowry is given in the blood which flowed from His side. Here, the Fathers find that the redemption achieved on the cross is also the source of the foundation of the Church.<sup>45</sup> In this biblical and patristic background, the Church is pictured as the bride of Christ also in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The unity of Christ and the Church ... is often expressed by the image of Bridegroom and bride. The theme of Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church was prepared for by the prophets and announced by John the Baptist (Jn 3:29). The Lord referred to Himself as the 'Bridegroom' (Mk 2:19). The apostle speaks of the whole Church, and each of the faithful, members of His Body, as a bride 'betrothed' to Christ the Lord so as to become but one spirit with

<sup>44</sup> Cf. R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, pp. 158-60; cf. also R. HOTZ, *Sakramente im Wechselspiel zwischen Ost und West*, p. 248.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, p. 56. The Syriac Fathers use many images for the idea of the betrothal and marriage of Christ and the Church.



Him (cf. Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; I Cor 6:15-17; 2 Cor 11:2). The Church is the spotless bride of the spotless Lamb (cf. Rev 22:17; Eph 1:4; 5:27). Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her (Eph 5:25-26). He has joined her with Himself in an everlasting covenant.<sup>46</sup>

The Second Vatican Council also teaches that the Church is the bride of Christ. "The Church is His beloved bride who calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the eternal Father".<sup>47</sup> This passage reveals the intensity of the relationship between Christ and His Church and expresses their strong and unique union through a nuptial metaphor. Thus, the personification of the Church as bride of Christ expressed in MLM has its clear biblical and patristic background.

#### 4.2.1. The Church as the Bride of Christ in Ephrem and Aphrahat

In the Syriac tradition, the image 'Church as the Bride of Christ' is a favourite theme. This theme is often found in the Syrian liturgy and theology especially in the liturgy of baptism and marriage. The Old Testament provides sufficient passages expressing Israel as the bride betrothed to God, taken place at the time of the Covenant, and the Law given on Mount Sinai. Commenting on this particular occasion Ephrem says, "A chaste wedding-feast took place in the wilderness, with the bridal chamber set on mount Sinai. The Holy One descended and took in betrothal the daughter of Abraham His beloved friend".<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> CCC, No. 796, pp. 210-11; cf. also AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 74:4, PL 36, 948-49.

<sup>47</sup> SC 7, AAS 56 (1964) 100-101. Christ is pictured here as '*Christus Ecclesiam, sponsam suam dilectissimam*'.

<sup>48</sup> EPHREM, *HResur.* 3:2; CSCO 248-249/Scr.Syr. 108-109, pp. 85, 68.



In this background, the image *Church as bride of Christ* is well expressed in Aphrahat and Ephrem, and it has become a predominant image in Syriac tradition. The Syriac word *mkâr* (ܡܟܐܪ) means to marry or to betroth and also means buying or barter. The passive particles *mkîrâ* means bridegroom and *mkîrta* means bride. The Syriac Fathers consider the Apostles as the 'go-between' or 'betrothers' (*mâkôrâ*), acting for the heavenly Bridegroom.<sup>49</sup> Aphrahat says, "You are the Apostles, 'Betrothers' of the Bride Adorned".<sup>50</sup> Thus, for both Ephrem and Aphrahat, the Church as bride of Christ is a favourite image. This image sees the Church as being constituted of two elements, the Jewish Nation or People and the Gentile Nations or Peoples. In this sense, Aphrahat says, "David married two kings' daughters, and Jesus also married two kings' daughters – the assembly of the People and the assembly of the Peoples".<sup>51</sup>

The theme of marriage of Christ and His Church is more frequent in Ephrem's hymns. He mentions the local church also to be the bride of Christ. When there was a persecution for the local church of Nisibis by the Persians, she cries to her Spouse: "Be jealous for me, for I am thine, and to thee, Lord, am I betrothed".<sup>52</sup> Ephrem says that Christ

<sup>49</sup> Cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.132.

<sup>50</sup> APHRAHAT, *Dem.* 14; *PS Pars Prima*, pp. 680.10-11. His explicit ecclesiological doctrine is contained in this passage.



betroted the Church in the river Jordan. He says, "My thought bore me to the Jordan, and I saw a marvel when there was revealed the glorious Bridegroom who to the bride shall bring freedom and holiness".<sup>53</sup> Ephrem sees that the Church's beauty is revealed in the openness and perfection of her teaching:

The Church reveals her comeliness, in the open her beauty is praised;

There is no blemish in her that she must hide, and no fault that she must veil.

For her teaching is open as the light;

Blessed be he who has illumined her with his truth.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting to note here that Ephrem in his hymns, moves freely from the collective to the individual, from the Church to the individual Christian, and then back from the individual to the collective. In other words, he moves from the individual bride, the soul, to the collective bride, the Church. However, Ephrem's focus is primarily on the collective. It is interesting to note that, when Ephrem speaks of the 'Church as bride', he prefers the term *mkîrtô* (ܡܟܝܪܬܐ; betrothed), rather than *kaltô* (ܟܠܬܐ; crowned one) which Jacob of Serugh uses of Israel.<sup>55</sup> Ephrem uses the image 'Church as the bride' as a parallel to the redeemed Church. It is well-expressed in the following hymn: "Long ago, a boastful bride came up out of the sea, while Hebrew women played

<sup>53</sup> *Sog.* 6; CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, pp. 205, 207; *Sogyâtâ* (dialogue hymns) is given at the end of the collection Ephrem's *HNat*.

<sup>54</sup> *HcHaer.* 23, 2; CSCO 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, p. 87, 84; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, p.142.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. "A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug", J. P. AMAR (trans.), *PO*, Tom. 47, Fasc. 1, no. 209, p. 38; For more on the betrothal of Israel and the Church to God, cf. S. P. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, pp. 99-101.



tambourines to give praise. And now, with the redeemed Church bathed in baptism".<sup>56</sup> Narsai, in his *Homily on Epiphany*, expresses the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church in a nuptial language:

He (John the Baptist) compared him (Jesus) to a Bridegroom because of His love for men; and He called the bride, the members of his race who adhered to him. (This one) fulfilled (the role) of the Bridegroom at the marriage feast of faith and took to himself the Church of the Gentiles (as) His betrothed of holiness. Instead of purple, He covered her with the garment of baptism and placed on her (head) a crown wholly plaited with the seals of the spirit.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.2.2. The Church as the Bride in Jacob of Serugh

Jacob of Serugh while explaining the symbolical meaning and relevance of the veil of Moses,<sup>58</sup> proposes the bridal imagery of Christ and the Church. He explains the veil

<sup>56</sup> "A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug", J. P. AMAR (trans.), *PO*, Tom. 47, Fasc. 1, no. 209, vv. 58-59a, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> F. MACLEOD (ed. & trans.), "*Metrical Homilies of Narsai on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*", *PO* 40, Fasc. 1, no. 182, vv. 409-15, pp. 94-95; cf. L. EDAKALATHUR, *The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition*, p. 60.

<sup>58</sup> Since Jacob's whole interpretation of the veil of Moses is not directly related to our theme, only the symbolical treatment of the bridal imagery is here mentioned (cf. P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, pp. 287-91). Like Ephrem, Aphrahat and Narsai, Jacob of Serugh also is very prominent in expressing theological truths in symbolic and typological terms through his sermons and homilies. He is reputed for his creative and illuminating treatment of the biblical texts. The bridal imagery is very prominent in Jacob's writings. For further details on the bridal imagery in the Syriac liturgical tradition, cf. H. ENGBERDING, "Die Kirche als Braut in der Ostsyrischen Liturgie", *OCP* 3 (1937) 5-48; F. GRAFFIN, "Recherches sur le thème de l'église épouse", *L'Orient Syrien* 3 (1958) 317-36.



which Moses placed over his face after the Theophany on Mount Sinai (Ex 34:33-35). Jacob of Serugh says: "The hidden Father betrothed a bride to his Only Begotten, having instructed her through prophecy in a symbolic way".<sup>59</sup> Here, Jacob mentions that the role of the Father is great in the matter of the betrothal ceremony of His Son. For this remarkable event, the Father built a great palace for the Son and His bride. The Father built a 'great palace' for the 'bride of light' (Church) and depicted the Bridegroom (Christ) in her royal palace. Jacob of Serug says:

Moses entered in and, like a skilled artist, delineated the bridegroom and the bride, and then covered the great picture with a veil.

He put in his writings that 'a man should leave his father and mother

and cleave to his wife' (Gen. 2:24), so that the two of them might be one completely. The prophet Moses introduced the account of the man and his wife

since through them Christ and his Church are spoken of.<sup>60</sup>

Moses saw Christ with the exalted eye of his prophecy and understood how Christ and his Church become one in the baptismal water. He says that the 'Bridegroom and the bride are spiritually perfected one' and the 'two shall be one'. He says that the Jewish people were not capable of grasping the 'great mystery' of that union. "The veiled Moses saw Christ and called him 'man', he saw the Church too, and called her

<sup>59</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:85-86, p. 287; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 74.

<sup>60</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:89-94, p. 287; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 74; cf. S. J. BEGGIANI, *Early Syriac Theology*, p.57.



'woman'".<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to note here that Jacob of Serugh compares Moses who veiled the 'great mystery' of Christ-Church relationship in his prophecy and Paul who unveils the 'great mystery' of such relationship in marital terms. In the following passage, Jacob clearly refers to the 'veiled great mystery' of Moses and the 'unveiled great mystery' of Paul.

After the wedding feast Paul entered in and beheld the veil lying there; he seized and removed it from the fair couple.

Thus did he uncover and reveal to the entire world Christ and His Church

whom the prophet Moses had depicted in his prophecy.

The apostle trembled and cried out 'how great is this mystery', and began to show what the covered picture was: 'in those called "man and wife" in the prophetic writings.

I recognize Christ and his Church, the two being one'.

The veil on Moses' face has now been removed,.....

The great mystery that was veiled has now come out into the open.

Let the wedding guests rejoice in the bridegroom and bride, so beautiful.

He gave himself to her, .... He made her his own, and she is linked to him and rejoices with him. .... for they are one, and where he is, there is she with him.

The great Paul, ..... expounded the mystery.<sup>62</sup>

Again, Jacob of Serugh establishes the relationship between baptism and Eucharist in which the Bridegroom and

<sup>61</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:103-04, p. 287; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 74.

<sup>62</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:113-131, p. 287; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 75.

the bride become one: "In the Eucharist she received Him, and so Moses' words, that the two shall be one, were established. From the water comes the chaste and holy union of bride and Bridegroom, united in spirit in baptism".<sup>63</sup> Jacob continues in his homily that Christ the Bridegroom died for His bride the Church, He gave His blood as the bride-price and sealed their marriage with the wounds on His body. Jacob says that Christ gave His bride the power to overcome death and Satan:

(Christ) entered upon the house, chose a stone, and set the foundation

(Gave the bride) an earnest to overcome death and Satan....

The Bridegroom chose it, His Father carved it in that revelation

And the Holy Ghost had it finished

and settled in the foundation of the Church.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.2.3. The Church as the Bride in Other Writings

The Fathers and theologians of the early Church developed the bridal imagery of the Church extensively, and it is adopted in the various liturgies in order to establish the symbolism of the mystery of the Church. Cyprian when he talks about the unity of the Church, refers to the image Church as the bride of Christ who is also the mother of the children of God.<sup>65</sup> Clement of Alexandria says that Jesus Christ did not

<sup>63</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:136-38, p. 287; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 75.

<sup>64</sup> JACOB OF SERUGH, *de Interrog. Christ et Revel. Petri*, Hom. XXIV; Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 460, p. 181; cf. G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition", *SCC-6*, p. 54.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. CYPRIAN, *De Unitate Ecclesiae* 4: 12-13; PL 4, 500.



marry earlier, because He had His own proper bride the Church.<sup>66</sup> Origen in his *Commentary on Mathew*, refers the image Church as the bride of Christ.<sup>67</sup> Bonaventure regards Church as the Bride. He insists on the ecclesial dimension for the salvation and eternal inheritance. "She is 'the bride of Christ' whose sons are the only ones Christ the Spouse deems worthy of the eternal inheritance".<sup>68</sup>

Gregory of Nyssa wrote a symbolical and mystical treatise on the bridal nature of the Church. He uses the bridal imagery in the context of the Old Testament Canticle of Canticles (Song of Songs), while Ephrem uses New Testament references. In his fifteen homilies on the Canticle of Canticles, Gregory of Nyssa has elaborately discussed the mystical theology concerning the Church.<sup>69</sup> Throughout his homilies,

<sup>66</sup> Cf. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *Stromatum* III, 49, 3; PG 8, 1130.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. ORIGEN, *Comm. a Mattheo* 14:17; PG 13, 1229-31; cf. also E. BELLINI, "Sponsa Christi", *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, G. PELLICIA, G. ROCCA (eds.), vol. 9, pp. 76-77.

<sup>68</sup> BONAVENTURE, *Breviloquium*, Pars VI, c.5 (V. 270-71); P. J. MILLER, *Marriage: The Sacrament of Divine-Human Communion: A Commentary on St. Bonaventure's Breviloquium*, vol. 1, pp. 146-47.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Comm. in Canticum Canticorum*, PG 44; 772, 809, 821, 825, 829, 836-37, 949 etc. In all these references, he has explained the beauty and splendour of the Church as the bride of Christ. Cf. J. M. SHEA, *The Church: According to St. Gregory of Nyssa's Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles*, pp. 2-15. In the Council of Constantinople in 381, Gregory of Nyssa was hailed as a 'pillar of orthodoxy'. Until his death in 394, he retained his place as one of the great authorities of the Church in the East. He has contributed in large measure to the areas of philosophy, theology and mysticism. The rise of monasticism also influenced his thoughts. His ecclesiology is contained in the homilies on the canticle which is a systematic view of his thought on the Church. The two striking features of his thought are his speculative bent and the synthetic character. The most important characteristic of his mystical theology is its Christ-centeredness. For him, the spiritual life is an imitation of Christ and it centres on the Son as the image of God, the spiritual man's model.



Gregory depicts the bride as living in the intimate union of love with the Groom. This life of love is her inner essence and the deepest bond of union between herself and the Groom. Gregory connects the relationship between Christ and the Church by mentioning Paul's Epistle to Ephesians chapter 5 in which Paul speaks of this union as a mystery.<sup>70</sup> In the so-called second epistle of Clement of Rome, he speaks of the Church which existed even before the creation of the sun and moon. But she was invisible, spiritual and barren, and now she has become flesh. She is the body of Christ; she is His spouse and we have been given to her as children. .... "For the Scriptures say: 'God made them male and female. The male is Christ, the female is the Church. Now the Church, being spiritual, was manifested in the flesh of Christ'.<sup>71</sup>

For Ignatius of Antioch, every Christian marriage symbolizes the eternal bond between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church, His bride: "Tell my sisters to love the Lord and to be content with their husband in body and soul. In like manner, exhort my brethren in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loves the Church".<sup>72</sup> Chrysostom also speaks extensively on the image of the Church as bride. He exhorts the couple to be modelled on the Christ-Church relation in which Christ is seen as the Head. Here, Chrysostom

<sup>70</sup> Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Comm. in Canticum Canticorum*, PG 44, 836-37.

<sup>71</sup> *2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of Clement* 14:1-4; J. QUASTEN, *Patrology: The Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, vol. 1, pp. 55-56.

<sup>72</sup> IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Ad Polycarpum* 5:1; PG 5, 868; Cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology: the Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, vol. 1, p. 68. It is Ignatius of Antioch who first used the term 'Catholic Church' to mean the faithful collectively. In *Ad Smyr.* 8:2, he says that where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.



makes comparison to the conjugal symbolism of spouses to that of Christ and the Church. For him, the Church remains a faithful bride of Christ.<sup>73</sup> All these above mentioned fathers and theologians used the bridal symbolism to express the intimate union and relation of Christ and the Church. They also express the particular nature and role of both Christ and the Church, as Bridegroom and bride respectively.

#### 4.2.4. The Church as Bride of Christ in the West Syrian Liturgical Prayers

The Church as bride of Christ is a lovely image in the West Syrian liturgy and one rich in content. This image is beautifully expressed in various prayers and hymns of both the West Syrian and the Malankara Liturgies besides that of the marriage service. In these prayers and hymns, the intimate relationship of Christ with the Church is expressed through the symbol of marriage. The liturgical prayers, especially the *prômiûn-sêdrô* of the different feasts and seasons reveal the rich theology and ecclesiology of the West-Syrian Church. The West Syrian tradition or prayers emphasise the theme of the Church as bride in its different liturgical prayers. In the following section, we expose some of the important references which are quoted from the different prayers and hymns of the various seasons and cycles.

(a) Prayers from *Pênqîtô*: As we see the image 'Church as the bride of Christ' in MLM, we find this image in different West-Syrian liturgical prayers. In *Pênqîtô*, especially in its *prômiûn-sêdrô* of the *qûdôs edtô* and *hûdôs edtô*, we find an extensive description of the Church in which the Church is

<sup>73</sup> Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *In Epist. ad Ephesios*, Hom. No. 20; PG 62, 135-40.

imaged as the bride betrothed to her Bridegroom Christ. In the evening prayer of the *qûdôs edtô*, the following hymn praises the role and the duty of the Church as the Bride of Christ, and also praises her admirable beauty:

Our hearts overflow with noble thoughts  
in praise of the bride adorned with all comeliness,  
blessed by God from all eternity. The Son of the King  
desired her beauty .....

Blessed are you who are the way, the truth and the life  
How fair and comely you are, Church of true believers,  
Bride of Christ, Your Spouse.<sup>74</sup>

In the following hymn, we find that Christ the Bridegroom sacrifices His life for her, and gives His body and blood and prepares a bridal chamber for her:

The Lord has placed in you His body and His blood of  
life that you may enter the bridal chamber, .....

Sing praise to your Bridegroom who has taken away from  
you the evil of the darkness of error.<sup>75</sup>

In the evening prayer of the feast of *hûdôs edtô* also, we find the same theme: "Church of true believers ... bride of the Most High, rejoice and thrill with gladness on your feast ... Church whose feast it is, rejoice in your marriage in the

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<sup>74</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye, (Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum)*, vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, p. 1; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, pp. 1-2.

<sup>75</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye, (Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum)*, vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, pp. 4-5; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, pp. 4-5.



midst of your people".<sup>76</sup> We find also many other references in various liturgical prayers of different seasons found in *Pênqîto*.<sup>77</sup>

(b) Prayers from *qyâmtô*<sup>78</sup>. We find the themes such as the Church is selected from the Gentiles; she is bought with the price of Christ's blood, and made His bride. Christ wedded the Church on the cross and shed blood for her and expiated our sins; the Church praises her Bridegroom with joy and so forth. Again, in the hymn '*Al Semaôn*', especially sung when the bishop blesses the people after the Holy Mass, we find that Church saying, 'I am like an adorned bride for the Messiah'.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, pp. 30-31; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, pp. 20-22.

<sup>77</sup> *Penqito da-slowoto d-lilyo imom ak takso d-'idto Antukoyto d-Suryoye*, (*Breviarum juxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum*), vol. 2, ed. by I. G. SELHOT, pp. 1-41; cf. F. ACHARYA, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit*, vol. 2, The Crown of the Year – Part One, pp. 1-31; cf. also Syriac Liturgy, *Feria auri, ad Vesper*, Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 234, p. 58. Many of such prayers showing Christ-Church relationship and the bridal nature of the Church are found in the following documents: Syriac Liturgy, in *Festo SS. Apostles Petri et Pauli*, Cod. De Propaganda (Syriac), 64, p. 135, 141; 65, p. 369; *Hymnum Dedicat. Ecclesiae*, Cod. Vat. (Syr.), 188, p. 73; G. PANICKER, "The Church in the Syriac Tradition", *SCC-6*, pp. 50-52.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Malankara Suriyani Katholikkasabha – Visudha Kurbanakramom - Qyamthoprarthana*, St. Mary's Press, Trivandrum, 2010, pp. 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 47, 48, 49, 50, 75, 77, 81, 92, 94, 102. *qyâmtô* prayers recited after the Easter season. The Syriac word *ܩܝܡܬܐ* (*qyâmtô*) means (1) standing form (2) rising up, the day our Lord's resurrection, Easter; cf. J. P. SMITH (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus*, p. 504.

<sup>79</sup> cf. *Malankara Suriyani Katholikkasabha – Visudha Kurbanakramom*, St. Mary's Press, Trivandrum, 2010, p. 235.



(c) Hymns in the *Šhîmô*: We find repeatedly the image of the Church as bride and her nature and particular role. In these passages we find the themes such as the Church the bride is pure and faithful, she is built on the palms of the apostles, guarded by her Bridegroom's words and apostles, saved and redeemed by the cross, born from the side of Christ, built on the rock, compared to paradise etc.<sup>80</sup>

The West-Syrian liturgy as a whole emphasis the image of Church as the bride of Christ. In the above prayers and hymns, we find the following ideas: Church the bride, has been betrothed to her Bridegroom; Christ washed and purified her and betrothed her in the river Jordan, and finally married to her on the cross; she is the adorned bride; the Bridegroom gave His body and blood to her and she is redeemed by His blood; the Church, is born from the side of the Bridegroom and so on. In all these liturgical passages, we find many titles for the Church such as the adorned bride, glorious bride, bride of the King, bride of the Most High, bride of the heavenly Bridegroom and spouse of the Son of God.

#### **4.2.5. The Church as the Bride of Christ in Malankara Liturgy of Marriage**

The theme of the wedding of Christ with the Church is well-expressed in the Malankara liturgy of marriage. The MLM

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Šhîmô Namaskaram* (Ferial Office of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church), St. Mary's Press, Trivandrum, 2009, first section - *Subaho*; pp. 66, 84, 103, 117, 153, 166, 174, 193, 194, 197, 204, 207, 210, 213, 218, 228, 235, 236, 247 ; second section - *Men'olam*; pp. 257, 258, 263, 266, 276, 279, 286, 288, 306, 307, 311, 320, 323, 324, 331, 345, 352, 370, 376, 378, 379, 382, 385, 390, 392, 393, 395, 397, 399, 401, 402, 403,



depicts the Church eighteen times as the bride of Christ.<sup>81</sup> The bridal nature of the Church as well as the ecclesial dimension of marriage is expressed in all these prayers and hymns especially in the *prômiûn-sêdrô* of MLM. The following are the important references which propose the role and nature of the Church as the bride of Christ:

- (1) In the *eniyônô*, we find that “the holy Church was betrothed to Christ (أَلْمَحَدِّثَا هُوَ لَ حَبْلًا فَبِعَدَا لَخَفَسَا) (حَدِّثَا)”.<sup>82</sup>
- (2) Again in the *prômiûn*, it is mentioned, “The heavenly Bridegroom who has chosen for himself the Church (حَبْلًا) (سَلَا عَصَا وَحَا لَه) ....who betrothed to himself the earthly Church”.<sup>83</sup>
- (3) “When the heavenly Bridegroom betrothed himself to the holy Church (حَدِّثَا هُوَ لَ حَبْلًا فَبِعَدَا لَخَفَسَا) (حَدِّثَا)”.<sup>84</sup>
- (4) In the *sûgîto* the bridal Church sings: “I am the Church, I am the Church, the spouse of the Most High”.<sup>85</sup> Here, the whole hymn expresses the Christ-Church spousal union and their close union and love.
- (5) In the *sûgîto*, we find again the following passages: “I adore the Bridegroom who came and betrothed me (أَنَا مَهْرًا أَنَا لَه حَسَلَا وَأَنَا هَمَحَدِّثَا).... through the waters of baptism (صَحَّ صَنَا وَصَحَّه وَمَا)”.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Koodhasakramom*, pp. 47, 48, 51, 55, 56, 57, 58, 67, 68, 69, 71, 77, 79, 80.....

<sup>82</sup> MLM 43; ET 236; ST 31.

<sup>83</sup> MLM 47; ET 238; ST 33.

<sup>84</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>85</sup> MLM 55; ET 242; ST 41.

<sup>86</sup> MLM 55; ET 242-43; ST 42.

- (6) In the hymn of *qûqôyô*, the Church is described as very beautiful and spotless. "How beautiful you are (صَلَا هَفَبَا), O Daughter of the Gentiles, Solomon sings Your praises, your lips drop honeycomb, the fragrance of your garment is like roses in April, and you are altogether beautiful and spotless.... And your pure mouth is sprinkled with the Blood of the Son of God...".<sup>87</sup>
- (7) The Church is confident in her safety. She says that she is like a glorious bride, "I am surrounded by three fortresses and the evil one cannot enter through them. These fortresses are securely locked .... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are these indivisible fortresses and I live in the midst of them like a glorious bride (أَمْرَ فَلَا حَصْبَا)".<sup>88</sup>
- (8) The bridal Church again says, "You are the young One who betrothed me (أَمْرَ لِحَا وَصَدَا) ... I am Your betrothed O my Lord.... You made my bridal chamber in heaven and invited me that I may be Yours".<sup>89</sup>

All these passages express that the Church is the faithful bride of Christ. They manifest the conjugal love between Christ and the Church. Christ the heavenly Bridegroom is betrothed to the Church of the Nations, He purified, washed, and glorified His spouse. He invited to His wedding banquet the prophets, apostles, martyrs ... To the apostles Simon and John, He entrusted her. As we have already seen, many of the liturgical prayers are formed from excerpts from the mystical, symbolical and typological writings of the Fathers of the Church. In this

<sup>87</sup> MLM 67; ET 249; ST 51.

<sup>88</sup> MLM 68; ET 249; ST 52.

<sup>89</sup> MLM 78; ET 255; ST 61.



way, many of the patristic references which show the symbolical relationship between Christ the Bridegroom and Church the bride are expressed in MLM.

As in the West Syrian liturgy, the theme 'Church as the Bride' is seen in the East Syrian liturgy also. The wedding of the Christ with the Church is beautifully expressed in the liturgical seasons of Epiphany and of the Dedication of the Church as well as in the sacrament of marriage. Here, some passages refer to God the Father also as the Spouse of the Church. "Blessed are you, O Church, crowned bride of the Father, the King of kings".<sup>90</sup> Again, Christ is also pictured as the Bridegroom of the Church. Many references indicate that Christ betrothed the Church in the waters of the river Jordan. In the Epiphany service, we find some references to the Old Testament betrothals at waters of wells, for example, the betrothal of Rebecca to Isaac (Gen 24:10), betrothal of Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29:9) and Moses and Seffora (Ex 2:15) typifying the betrothal of Christ with the Church. Christ betrothed the Church in the river of Jordan through the mediation of John the Baptist.<sup>91</sup> As in the West Syrian liturgy, in the East Syrian liturgy also, we find important themes such

<sup>90</sup> *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, ed. by P. BEDJAN, vol. III, S. Congregationem 'Pro Ecclesia Orientali', Rome, 1938, p. 409; H. ENGBERDING, "Die Kirche als Braut in der ostsyrischen Liturgie", *OCP* 3 (1937) 8-9; J. VELLIAN, "The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Liturgy", *SL* 11-12 (1976) 189-90; Engberding indicates many other references to present God the Father as the Bridegroom of the Church, cf. p. 8; F. GRAFFIN, "Recherches sur le thème de L'Église-Épouse dans les liturgie et la littérature de la langue Syriacque", *L'Orient Syrien* III (1968) 317-34.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. H. ENGBERDING, "Die Kirche als Braut in der ostsyrischen Liturgie", *OCP* 3 (1937) 13-15; J. VELLIAN, "The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Liturgy", *SL* 11-12 (1976) 190.



as Christ purifies the Church and betrothes her in the water of Jordan, pays her the dowry in His body and blood, marries her on the cross, leads her to His heavenly bridal chamber, invites His friends to the wedding banquet etc.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4.2.6. 'Doctrine of 'the Birth of the Church from the Side of Christ' in Syriac Tradition

The Malankara liturgy of marriage has many allusions to the idea that the Church is born from the pierced side of Christ. It is from the blood that came forth from the pierced side of Christ, the Church is born. In this way, Christ gave His own blood to win her as His own bride. He bought her with the blood that came forth from His pierced side. The following references have this allusion. "He called them and ordered them to watch over her with care, she who is bought by His precious blood".<sup>93</sup> The following passage indicates that the pure mouth of the Church that born from the blood of Christ is sprinkled with the same blood. It means that the Church that is born from the blood of Christ is filled with the power of that blood. She lives in the strength of the blood of the son of God. "Your pure mouth is sprinkled with the blood of the Son of God".<sup>94</sup>

For the Syriac Fathers, the Church the new Eve, was born from Christ's side during the death sleep, just as the old Eve came from the side of Adam asleep. According to the

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Breviarium juxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, ed. by P. BEDJAN, vol. III, pp. 392, 410, 441, 397, 314, 340, 432 etc.; H. ENGBERDING, "Die Kirche als Braut in der ostsyrischen Liturgie", *OCP* 3 (1937) 15-43; J. VELLIAN, "The Church as Bride in the East Syrian Liturgy", *SL* 11-12 (1976) 191-92.

<sup>93</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>94</sup> MLM 67; ET 249; ST 51.



Syriac Fathers, the biblical reference Jn 19:34, 'From Him came forth blood and water' symbolises the Church and sacraments.<sup>95</sup> The Syriac Fathers see the mysteries of baptism, Eucharist, crowning (marriage), and the Church as flowing from the event of the cross. The baptism in the Jordan has its climax in the death of Christ on the cross. The 'water and blood' that comes forth from the pierced side of Christ effects the birth of the Church and also her wedding with her heavenly Bridegroom. In this manner, the Fathers symbolise 'the water and blood' as the two constitutive elements of the Church, baptism and Eucharist. It is through baptism that one enters the Church and it is the Eucharist which makes the Church.

In his *Commentary on Diatessaron*, Ephrem comments on Jn 19:34 in the following way: "There came forth blood and water": that is, His Church, which is built on His 'side': just as in the case of Adam, his wife was taken from his side, Adam's wife being his 'rib' and so our Lord's 'blood' is His Church. From Adam's rib issued death, from our Lord's rib life".<sup>96</sup> Here, Ephrem contrasts Eve, who issued from the rib of the first Adam, with that of the Church, which issued from the side of the second Adam. In other words, he contrasts Eve's birth from Adam's side with the Church's birth from Christ's side. For Ephrem, the blood and water from Christ's side are for the benefit of all humanity: "There came forth water, and

<sup>95</sup> Cf. EPHREM, *CNis.* 39:7; CSCO 240/Scr.Syr. 102; pp. 24-25.

<sup>96</sup> *ECArm*, XXI, 10-11, CSCO 137, p. 319; SC 121, pp. 379-80; cf. S. P. BROCK, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", *Sobornost*, Series 7: No. 6 (1978) 462; S. P. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, pp. 80-81; R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 95, 125, 129; Cf. P. SOBHY, *Church as Mystery*



blood too, so that they might stand in awe and wash their hands from Your blood. The slain one provided from His own blood. The water wherewith His slayers, might wash clean and themselves find life".<sup>97</sup>

The side of Christ looks back to Adam's rib, his rib, from which Eve was miraculously extracted (Gen 2:21); the lance likewise looks back to the cherub's revolving sword which excludes fallen mankind from Paradise (Gen 3:24); the blood and the water, on the other hand, prefigure the Church and the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist. The piercing of the side of the Second Adam effects the re-entry of mankind — the first Adam, into Paradise.<sup>98</sup>

The typological association made here is particularly significant. In the above exegesis, we find three important elements: the side, the piercing with the lance, and the blood and water. Here, this passage reveals that the pierced side of Christ gives birth to the 'bride', the Church, as the side of Adam gives birth to his wife, Eve. Thus, Eve's birth from Adam is often compared with the birth of the Church from Christ. In the birth of the Church from the second Adam, Ephrem makes an explicit ecclesiological reference. So, in the piercing of Christ's side, Ephrem sees Christ as the second Adam. Ephrem

<sup>97</sup> *HVirg.* 30:10; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 112; S. P. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, p. 83.

<sup>98</sup> S. P. BROCK, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", *Sobornost*, Series 7: No. 6 (1978) 462; For Ephrem's image 'the lance which re-opened Paradise', cf. *OCP* 39 (1973) 224-34. Ephrem explains the creation of the first Eve from the first Adam, under the figure of the Church, the second Eve, from Christ, the second Adam. Eve's birth from Adam without the conjugal relation reminds us the figures, Joseph and



says that the piercing of Christ's side makes it possible for humanity to re-enter into Paradise:

Blessed is the Merciful One who saw the sword,  
besides Paradise, barring the way to the Tree of Life.  
He came and took Himself a body which was wounded  
So that, by the opening of His side  
He might open up the way to Paradise.<sup>99</sup>

Aphrahat and Ephrem agree in seeing Christ, hanging on the tree of the Cross and pierced by the lance, as the Tree of Life bearing its fruits. This imagery is considered as the source of the sacraments and the fruit of the Tree of Life is viewed in terms of the 'Medicine of Life'.<sup>100</sup> Here, Christ is understood as source of the Church's life. This imagery is implicitly ecclesiological, and expresses the Church's vital union with Christ.

Jacob of Serugh also inherits from Ephrem and others a rich typological association for Jn 19:34. He describes that, just as Eve is born from the side (rib) of Adam (Gen 2:22), so, too, the Church, the New Eve is also born from the side of Second Adam, Christ:

Christ slept on the cross, and Baptism came forth from him;

<sup>99</sup> *HNat.* 8:4; CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, p. 59; 51-52; S. P. BROCK, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual Vision of St. Ephrem the Syrian*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *HNat* 3, 15; CSCO 186-187/Scr.Syr. 82-83, p. 23, 21; cf. R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 119-20; cf. also *HVirg.* 31,13; CSCO 223-24/Scr.Syr. 94-95, pp. 115-16, 100; *HEccl.* 49,8; CSCO 198-199/Scr.Syr. 84-85, p. 126, 122 etc. *ܡܘܨܪ ܚܝܝܐ* (*sam hayyê*) is a favourite term for the Eucharist in the Syriac tradition. *Sam hayyê* means Medicine of Life, often said of our Lord; cf. J. P. SMITH (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus*, p. 379.

the Bridegroom slept, and His side was pierced in His sleep,

He gave birth to the bride, as happened with Eve, in Adam his type.

The stillness of the sleep of death fell upon Him on the cross, and from Him came forth the Mother who gives birth to all spiritual beings: the Lord of Adam produced the New Eve in His sleep, to serve as the Mother of the children of Adam, in Eve's place.<sup>101</sup>

For Jacob, Eve's birth from Adam's rib is understood in two ways: it serves as an example of a miraculous birth – a type of both Christ's virgin birth and the birth of the Church and the sacraments from Christ's side. In the following passage, Jacob says that the virgin earth gave birth to Adam, Adam to Eve, Mary to Christ and Christ's side to the Church and sacraments:

The virgin earth gave birth to Adam in holy fashion, so as to indicate clearly Mary's giving birth.

Adam in turn slept, and his side was pierced; from it came forth Eve to be mother for the whole world, serving as an image of that sleep of death on the cross

And that side which gave (birth to) baptism.

Adam slept and gave the whole world a mother; the Saviour died, and there flows from him baptismal water.

If the side gave birth to Eve, as is written, then a virgin too gave birth to the Son, as is indicated.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, II, p. 589 ; III, p. 299; S. P. BROCK, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", *Sobornost*, Series 7: No. 6 (1978) 465-66; S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 333.

<sup>102</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, p. 320; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 332; cf. also P. BEDJAN (ed.) *S. Martyrii, qui et Sahdona, quae supersunt omnia*, p. 634.



Here, Jacob sees the birth of both the Church and sacraments from the side of Christ. For him, one of the main sources of baptism is Christ's pierced side on the cross. "He came and opened up baptism on His cross ... water and blood flowed and became the baptismal font, the mother of life".<sup>103</sup> Again, he speaks of the Church as the Daughter of Light that came forth from the pierced side of Christ. By making a parallelism, Jacob comments that the woman who came from Adam's side gave birth to the mortals, but the Church that came forth from the pierced side of Christ gives birth to the immortals. Here, Jacob emphasises the real nature of the Church:

The Groom's side has been pierced, and from it the bride has come out, fulfilling the type provided by Adam and Eve,

He slept on the cross as Adam had slept his deep sleep, His side was pierced and from it there came forth the Daughter of light- water and blood as an image of divine children .....

Adam's wife bore human bodies subject to death, but this virgin bears spiritual beings who live for ever.

Adam's side gave birth to a woman who gives birth to mortals, while our Lord's to the Church who gives birth to immortals.<sup>104</sup>

Jacob finds that the piercing of Christ's side is an opening of a new well on Golgotha: "The crucifiers cast a

<sup>103</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. I, p. 162; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 329.

<sup>104</sup> P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, iii, Hom. 79:333-347, p. 287; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses", *Sobornost*, vol. 3 (1981) 80-81; cf. also S. P. BROCK, "The Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ", *Sobornost*, Series 7: No. 6 (1978) 463-64.

lance at the Fair One and pierced His side; from it flowed water and blood. A new well was opened on Golgotha".<sup>105</sup> It is interesting to note Jacob's reverse order i.e water and blood flowed (instead of John's Gospel's (19:34) 'blood and water came forth'). Here, he emphasises the sequence as a reference to baptism and Eucharist. The 'water came forth', because He was truly dead already; then there came forth blood also, so that it might be believed that He was also alive in truth.<sup>106</sup> "There flowed from Him water, to show that He was dead; and blood flowed too, to teach that He was alive, though dead".<sup>107</sup> It is very clear that Jacob, in his marriage imagery, depicts Christ as Bridegroom and the Church as His bride: "The Bridegroom's side was pierced, and from it came forth the Bride, fulfilling what had been depicted by Eve and Adam".<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.2.6.1. The Doctrine of the Birth of the Church in Other Writings

Both the Eastern and Western approaches to ecclesiology concentrate on the doctrine that the Church, the second Eve, is born from the side of Christ, the second Adam. It emphasizes also the mystical union between Christ's body

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<sup>105</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. II, pp. 588-89; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 331.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 330.

<sup>107</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. II, p. 589; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 333.

<sup>108</sup> P. BEDJAN (ed.) *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, vol. III, p. 299; cf. S. P. BROCK, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh", *OCA* 205 (1976) 332.



and the Church.<sup>109</sup> Tertullian says that the creation of Eve from the side of Adam prefigures the birth of the Church from the wounded side of the Lord. The following passage refers to the idea that the Church, true mother of the living is born from the side of Christ. "As Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam's sleep prefigured the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, that from the wound inflicted on His side might, in like manner (as Eve was formed), be typified the Church, the true mother of the living".<sup>110</sup> In this way, the Church reflects and lives in the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice on the cross reveals Christ's intimate love of the Church, His bride. In the act of His self-immolation, Church the spouse comes forth from His pierced side. His death becomes at once the birth and espousal of His Church. Ambrose also refers to the same idea. He is of opinion that as Eve was formed from the Adam's side, and the Church also was formed from the pierced side of Christ on the cross. Thus, the birth of the Church is symbolised as from the side of Christ.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, "E Latere Christi", A. R. BATLOGG, et. al. (eds.) *Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, Band 3, pp. 9-10; H. RAHNER, "Flumina de Ventre Christi : The Patristic Auslegung von Jn 7 :37-38", H. RAHNER, *Symbole der Kirche : Die Ekklesiologie der Väter*, p. 177. The Fathers are of opinion that Christ's body is the spring from which the sacraments of the Church streams out; cf. IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* III, 4,1; PG 7, 856 ; TERTULLIAN, *Adversus Judaeos* 13 ; PL 2, 635.

<sup>110</sup> TERTULLIAN, *De anima*, 43; PL 2, 723 "Si ergo Adam forma futuri, quomodo de latere dormientis Eva facta est (Gen 2: 21-22), sic ex latere Domini dormientis, id est, in passione morientis, et in cruce percusso de lancea (Jn 19:34) manaverunt Sacramenta quibus formaretur Ecclesia"; cf. J. QUASTEN, *Patrology: The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus*, vol. II, pp. 330-31.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. AMBROSE, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 2: 85-89; PL 15, 1666-68; CCC, 2 ed. No. 766, p. 201.



Augustine says that the Church was formed from the pierced side of Christ, just as Eve was formed from the side of Adam. "The Church is the spouse of Christ; she was formed while Christ slept the sleep of death; she issued forth from the side of her Spouse when His side was pierced by the blow of a lance, when from that wound flowed forth the sacraments".<sup>112</sup> Augustine compares the mystical sleep of Adam with the death of Christ on the cross and the birth of Eve with that of the Church. He says, "Adam slept that Eve might be; Christ died that the Church might be".<sup>113</sup>

Vatican II teaches, "For it was from the side of Christ as He slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth 'the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church'.<sup>114</sup> "If the Church is born from the side of Christ, so the Church is espoused by Christ in His dying. The blood and water pouring forth from His pierced heart, is the fountain of the sacraments."<sup>115</sup> All these passages mentioned above, express the symbolic theme that the New Eve is born from the pierced

<sup>112</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Enarratio in Psalmum*, 138:2; PL 37, 1785; cf. R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, p. 159.

<sup>113</sup> AUGUSTINE, *In Joannis Evangelium*, 10; PL 35, 1463; "*Dormit Adam ut fiat Eva; moritur Christus ut fiat Ecclesia*"; cf. *L'interprétation augustinienne du magnum sacramentum de Ephes. 5, 32*, in "Recherches augustinienes", XII (1977) 16-19; cf. L. LIGIER, *Il matrimonio : questioni teologiche e pastorali*, p. 34; cf. also P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 81; cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, p. 109; The piercing of Christ's side suggests the doctrine of the birth of the Church on which many Fathers developed this symbolism extensively.

<sup>114</sup> SC, 5, AAS 56 (1964) 99, "*Nam de latere Christi in cruce dormientis ortum est totius Ecclesiae mirabile sacramentum*".

<sup>115</sup> P. J. ELLIOTT, *What God has Joined .... : The Sacramentality of Marriage*, p. 28.



side of Christ. In this sense, this image emphasizes four aspects: the close union between Christ and the Church, the mutual love between Christ and the Church, the transcendence of Christ, and the dependence of the Church on Christ.<sup>116</sup> MLM in its prayers mention that Christ loved the Church, His bride and He offered Himself on the cross for her. She is born from His blood and He deliberately shed His blood to own her as His own.

#### 4.3. MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE AS 'LOCUS ECCLESIOLOGICUS'

Vatican II calls liturgy the main stream and strength of the Church (cf. SC 10), and considers it as the heart of the Church. Liturgy is the official celebration of the Church in which the people are linked with Christ, the centre of their life. Vatican II, in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, insists upon this idea as follows:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy ..... In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Cf. R. HASSEVELDT, *The Church: A Divine Mystery*, p. 159.

<sup>117</sup> SC 14; AAS 56 (1964) 104; A. FLANNERY, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, p. 27. In the background of the Council teaching, liturgy is considered the common work of Christ and His Church, and an efficacious sign of Christ's presence in His Church. By our celebration of the divine mysteries, we are drawn into the saving action of Christ; cf. R. F. TAFT, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, p. 164.



Therefore, it is important to have a better idea of liturgical theology and instruction. Malankara liturgy, as a whole, in its nature and essence, remains a source of instruction and theology. The prayers, hymns, especially the long *prômiûn-sêdrô* consist of its theological, ecclesiological and the spiritual dimension. In this manner, Malankara liturgy enables the faithful to live the liturgical life and to share it in so that they could participate in the liturgy both internally and externally. It helps the faithful to lead their spiritual life in a proper way and they acquire a genuine understanding of the liturgy and liturgical theology.<sup>118</sup> In this manner, Malankara liturgy is the *theological locus* or source of its theology and ecclesiology. Since, it is closely related to the Scriptural passages and the commentaries on these written by the Fathers of the Church, Malankara liturgy has a primary dogmatic and theological importance. Malankara liturgy gives a theological basis to the explanation of the worship and the whole liturgical life of the Church. It makes a connection between the liturgical act and the faith and life of the Church. In this sense, the words of Schmemmann are to be noted, "without liturgical theology our understanding of the Church's faith and doctrine is bound to be incomplete".<sup>119</sup> When Christian marriage loses the divine

<sup>118</sup> The science dealing with liturgy is properly called liturgiology or liturgical theology. It is a science which discusses the ceremonies, texts, symbols, actions of the Church as continuing the priesthood of Christ. It is closely related to the other theological disciplines such as dogma, morals, canon law, history, Scripture etc. Liturgical theology is the elucidation of the meaning of worship and it affords an explanation of doctrine entailed in worship; cf. M. M. SOLOVEY, *Eastern Liturgical Theology*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>119</sup> A. SCHMEMMANN, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, The Faith Press, London, 1966, p. 16; cf. M. M. SOLOVEY, *Eastern Liturgical Theology*, p. 18. The neglect of studying the liturgical theology is a neglect of Church teaching and dogma.



and creative purpose within the community of faith, the Church is weakened and is lessened its ability to witness to Christ and His kingdom.<sup>120</sup> In this way, faith and life are intimately closed. Walter Kasper says: "There is no other sphere in which faith and life are so intimately in contact with each other as in marriage".<sup>121</sup> Therefore, the celebration of marriage is a vital part of the liturgical life of the Christians.

#### 4.3.1. Ecclesiological Dimension of the Malankara Liturgy of Marriage

In the Malankara liturgy of marriage, we find many prayers in which the norms of conjugal union and communion are evoked, and their relation to the other goods of marriage is established. These prayers have an ecclesiological dimension and prepare the spouses to lead their life as a community in service to the Church and the kingdom of God. In these prayers, unity and indissolubility, spiritual love, unending joy, mutual accord and imperishable blessings are considered as the highest goods of marriage.<sup>122</sup> "May they have love, concord, peace and impassible unity among them. Strengthen them, O Lord, to help each other to keep purity in spirit and in body".<sup>123</sup>

The ecclesiological dimension of MLM is seen in every marriage of man and woman, a reflection of the 'wedding' of the Church to Christ. Thus, MLM compares the union of Christ with His Church to the marital union of man and woman. The

<sup>120</sup> Cf. V. GUROIAN, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1987, pp. 85-87.

<sup>121</sup> W. KASPER, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, Seabury Press, New York, 1980, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> MLM 47-48; ET 239; ST 34-35.

<sup>123</sup> MLM 52; ET 241; ST 38.



ecclesiological themes are evident in the patristic images and symbols. MLM expresses them through various patristic themes such as Christ betrothes the Church in the river Jordan, He washes and purifies her to make His bride, He gives the rings in His body as His sign of the betrothal, He weds her on the cross, He gives the dowry in His blood, He invites prophets, apostles, martyrs to His wedding banquet, he prepares a bridal chamber for her, and so on. All these references which we have already seen in the previous sections, reveal the ecclesiological dimension of MLM. The liturgy of marriage expresses the idea that the water blessed in the river Jordan at the baptism of Christ, and the blood and water poured out from the side of Christ are the gifts to His bride, the Church. The rich theme of Church as the bride, garden, swallow, moon, and other related ecclesial images expressed in MLM draw attention to the beauty of the Church, to the need to love the Church, to the Church's feminine face, and to its obligation to respond faithfully to the love of Christ.

The following section is an attempt to elucidate the ecclesiological dimension of the MLM. Since Malankara liturgy of marriage contains a number of ecclesial images and symbols, it is a genuine source of ecclesiological thought. MLM presents its ecclesiological dimension through a large number of ecclesial images as we have already found, such as the conjugal symbolism between Christ and Church, 'great mystery' of this indissoluble union, 'one flesh' experience of this strong relationship, intimate relation of Christ the Bridegroom and the Church, Christ's baptism as the betrothal of the Church, marriage of Christ with the Church on the cross, His own blood as the dowry to her, His body and blood as the ring to the Church, Church as the real bride of Christ, the birth of the Church from the side of Christ, Church as the



swallow, garden, moon and so on. The meaning of all these images found in MLM express the inner nature, purpose and mission of the Church. Because of such ecclesiological dimension in the marriage liturgy, MLM can be suitably called a '*locus ecclesilogicus*'. First of all, the Malankara liturgy of marriage presents every Christian marriage as a true image of the Christ-Church relationship. Since the earthly marriage is an image of the union between Christ and the Church, MLM expresses the idea that marriage happens both in heaven and earth. In this sense, Christian marriage is a heavenly experience on earth, and it is a fore-taste of the heavenly wedding banquet. MLM exhorts the spouses to image Christ the Bridegroom and the Church the Bride in their marital status. There are many references in MLM which express this model relationship between Christ and the Church. The following are the main ecclesiological dimensions of marriage found in the prayers and hymns of MLM. Since we have already mentioned many of the ecclesial images in the previous sections of the thesis, we refer to only some of the liturgical passages here. In these prayers, we find some beautiful descriptions of the Church and the ecclesiological dimension.

- (1) "The holy Church was betrothed to Christ with the ring, and she received His holy body and blood".<sup>124</sup> This passage clearly refers to the Church as the bride of Christ who received His body and blood as the ring of their indissoluble union. This body and blood of her Bridegroom is given to her children every day in the Eucharist.
- (2) The bridal Church is always adorned with the blessings from her Bridegroom, and she is blessed with the robe of

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<sup>124</sup> MLM 43; ET 236; ST 31.



glory. The theology of the Church, and consequently the ecclesiological dimension of MLM is fully expressed in the prayers and hymns, especially in its *sêdrô*. In the following passage quoted from *sêdrô* of the first service, we find the rich ecclesiological thoughts in MLM: "You are the One who bestowed imperishable blessings upon Your holy Church. You filled her with sweet and delightful odours and made her rich with Your divine imperishable richness. You clothed her with the robe of glory. You betrothed her from water and Spirit and You made her Your bride. By Your power You crushed the head of the enemy. You granted the Church in purity the ring which is Your innocent body and blood. You gladdened her and gloriously illumined her with Your splendid light and You made her dwell with You through the divine gifts and You have perfected her by the hands of the holy apostles".<sup>125</sup> The ecclesial dimension of MLM is very clear in this passage. After all these description of the Church, the liturgy applies it to the matrimonial life of the earthly spouses. The same *sêdrô* continues, "God, bless these rings with divine blessings as You have blessed the ring of Your holy Church ... Lord God, may this bridegroom and bride be perfected and completed in wisdom. By Your grace grant that all evil filth and detestable things be far from their marriage". MLM again shows that the Church is given many privileges by her Bridegroom. The Church is endowed by Christ with imperishable gifts and blessings. Her Bridegroom has given her power so that no enemy can attack her. He has given His own body and blood as the ring for showing His presence and protection forever. He made Simon, the

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<sup>125</sup> MLM 47-48; ET 239; ST 34.



householder and John, the preacher of the Church.<sup>126</sup> Thus, in every aspect, Church the bride is strongly protected by her Bridegroom.

- (3) The Church is redeemed by Christ's precious Blood which He gave her as His dowry: "She who is redeemed by His precious Blood".<sup>127</sup> This passage refers to the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church. Giving His own blood as His dowry for her and her redemption by His own blood expresses the ecclesiological dimension of their marital relationship.
- (4) MLM makes various attributes for the Church. For example, MLM expresses the Church as holy, incorruptible, Daughter of the Gentiles, adorned, faithful, redeemed, spouse of the Most High, rich, blessed, beautiful and so on. Among these, holy and faithful, beautiful, spouse of the Most High are often used. The following hymn presents the Church as: "How beautiful you are, O Daughter of the Gentiles, how beautiful you are. Solomon sings your praises, O holy Church. Your lips drop honey. The fragrance of your garment is like roses in April, and you are altogether beautiful and spotless ... On your forehead you have the sign of the cross and your pure mouth is sprinkled with the blood of the Son of God".<sup>128</sup> MLM mentions also that the Church sings glory to the Trinity. "The holy and faithful Church sings glory and praise to the Trinity who saves her"<sup>129</sup> and she is aware that she is protected and surrounded by three indivisible fortresses – Father, Son and the Holy

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>127</sup> MLM 49; ET 240; ST 36.

<sup>128</sup> MLM 67; ET 249; ST 51.

<sup>129</sup> MLM 50; ET 240; ST 37.

Spirit – so that the Evil one cannot enter in her.<sup>130</sup> Here, the ecclesial dimension of marriage is connected also with the Trinitarian nature.

- (5) In the *etro* of the second service, the priest prays for the spouses as follows: “Make them joyful in Your spiritual bridal chamber. Grant that they may take part in the feast that You promised for the saints”.<sup>131</sup>
- (6) In the final greeting, the priest says, “May Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom seal your marriage and as He rejoices in the Church may you also rejoice in each other”.<sup>132</sup>

All these passages clearly express the idea that Christian marriage is an image of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The key image of Church as the bride of Christ, the other important ecclesial images and the whole prayers, especially that of the *prômiûn-sêdrô* propose this fundamental idea. The relationship between Christ and the Church is particular in its nature. Christ betrothes her from the water of Jordan where He purifies and receives her as His bride. He clothes her with the robe of glory. Finally, He weds her on the cross where He gives her His own body as the ring and blood as the dowry. He promises to dwell with her for ever so that the Evil one cannot enter in her.<sup>133</sup> The prayers express also that Christ entrusts her to the apostles and she is protected by the Trinity. In all these references, the aspect of the Church is greatly emphasised. We found that Fathers attribute the Church's bridal bath as the purification before receiving her

<sup>130</sup> Cf. MLM 68; ET 249; ST 52.

<sup>131</sup> MLM 70; ET 249; ST 52.

<sup>132</sup> MLM 77; ET 254; ST 60.

<sup>133</sup> MLM 68; ET 249; ST 52.



as Christ's bride. The blood and water came from the side of Christ is also connected with the Church.

For MLM, the Christ-Church relationship is the model for the matrimonial relationship between the husband and wife. In this way, Christian marriage is an image of the union and love between Christ and the Church. Therefore, MLM stresses the property of indissolubility in marriage. MLM expresses also the idea that Christ is present in every earthly marriage, and He prepares a wedding banquet in heaven. Thus, the liturgical celebration becomes a foretaste of the celebration made in heaven. For MLM, marriage is absolutely an ecclesial event. In order to express this idea, in the concluding part, MLM makes an admonition to all the people who participate in the marriage celebration. It expresses the idea that all are convoked to the marriage feast for a true and proper ecclesial reason.

The ecclesiology of MLM consists in the greatest image that 'Church as bride and Christ as the Bridegroom' (Eph 5:21-33). The symbolism of the Bridegroom and bride, betrothal at Jordan and marriage on the cross, the blood as the bridal price, body as the ring, the adorning and crowning, entrance into the bridal chamber and the invitation for the wedding banquet express the ecclesiological dimension of MLM. These symbols are used to explain the life of the Church as the bride of Christ. Thus, the image of bride which is related to marriage shows its ecclesiological dimension. In this way, from the liturgical prayers of marriage, we could develop an ecclesiology. Through the patristic symbolism and liturgical prayers, we get a rich concept of the Church. In short, the theme of the Church is projected and presented in the prayers and images

of MLM and we could find here a fully developed theology of the Church which provide us various ecclesiological themes. The prayer on the blessings on the rings is in the following way: "For the fulfilment of gladness of the children of the Holy Church these rings are being blessed".<sup>134</sup> This prayer speaks of the spouses as the children of the Church. In the final greetings, the celebrant says, "May Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom seal your marriage and as He rejoices in the Church may you also rejoice in each other".<sup>135</sup> Since marriage is a reflection of the paradigm relationship that subsists between Christ and His Church, it is the source and foundation of the theology of marriage in MLM. This ecclesial character and the symbolic dimension reveal the Christ-Church relationship of the sacrament of marriage. In this sense, marriage is a life in Christ and in the Church.

MLM invites the Christian spouses to live the mystery of their vocation and mission more fervently and to contribute consequently to the spiritual renewal of the Church. This makes light on the ecclesial dimension of marriage. Since the Christian spouses participate in the mystery of the love of the 'marriage' between Christ and the Church, it becomes a model or paradigm for their conjugal life which, therefore, considered in the picture of the indissoluble union and fertile love. To participate in the mystery of unity and love of Christ and of the Church signifies to become part of the mystery of the death of Christ for His Church, and also, to carry out and apply one's own life of His redemption, and to be immersed in the flowing of love between Christ and His Church. The spouses are called

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<sup>134</sup> MLM 53; ET 241; ST 38.

<sup>135</sup> MLM 77; ET 254; ST 59.



to emulate the self-giving love of Christ.<sup>136</sup> Through their reciprocal love, the spouses build the Body of Christ. In virtue of the sacrament, the procreation and education of the children no longer remain as a pure human act, but become also as a sacred and supernatural mystery. Thus, the Christian family makes the first announcement of the Gospel and the promotion of the vocation proper to each member of the family. It is Christ Himself and His Church that generate and educate the members of the Mystical Body of Christ through the action of the parents.<sup>137</sup> The ecclesial dimension of marriage expresses its sacramental character connecting with the Mystical Body of Christ. Therefore, Christian marriage extends the Church through the family. In this way, sacramental marriage is an ecclesial act with ecclesial consequences and ecclesial end. Christian marriage is situated within the framework of ecclesiology. It expresses and reveals the redemptive love of God within and through the Church. The sacramental marriage signifies and effects an inner grace in the Church.

The ecclesiology of MLM derives also from its liturgical celebration. The prayers and the hymns help the people to

<sup>136</sup> Cf. M. TURNSEK, *Chiesa e sacramenti nella teologia del periodo preconciliare e nei decreti del Vaticano II: indagine sul rapporto tra sacramentalità ed ecclesiologia*, Exc. Diss. Pont. Univ. Gregoriana, Roma, 1991, p. 142; cf. G. PHILIPS, *La chiesa e il suo mistero: storia, testo e commento della Lumen Gentium*, Milano, 1989, p. 150; G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, p. 78.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. LG 11; AAS 57 (1965) 15-16; cf. also the Declaration 'Gravissimum Educationis' (on the Christian education) no. 3; the Decree 'Apostolicam Actuositatem' (On the Apostolate of the Laity) nos. 3,6,11; 'Gaudium et Spes' 48; AAS 58 (1966) 1067-69; cf. M. TURNSEK, *Chiesa e sacramenti nella teologia del periodo preconciliare e nei decreti del Vaticano II: indagine sul rapporto tra sacramentalità ed ecclesiologia*, p. 142.



deepen their faith. They give wide idea about the Church and its inner nature. As we have seen, the mystery of Christ and His Church centres around the nuptial imagery. The liturgical prayers express that Christ the Bridegroom is in close relation with His bride and He meets her, saved through His salvific mysteries. The whole salvific mysteries such as the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection are clearly expressed in the prayers and hymns. The awareness of all these ecclesial elements inherent in the liturgical prayers help the faithful to lead their life in a sensible way, especially it assists the spouses to lead their life in a witnessing manner with an ecclesial dimension. In this manner, the ecclesiological dimension of marriage establishes an important idea that Christian marriage has a primary role in making the Church in the world.

#### **4.3.2. Relevance of the Idea 'Marriage also Makes the Church' in the Matrimonial Ecclesiology**

The succinct idiom 'the Eucharist makes the Church' is common in theological circles. We find this idea and its eucharistic ecclesiology in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch (+107c.) and Cyprian (+258). In this interpretation of the eucharistic ecclesiology, Ignatius says that where there is an assembly gathered together with the bishop who celebrates the Eucharist, the Catholic Church is manifested in its fullness. It is he who first used the expression 'Catholic Church'.<sup>138</sup> Thus, the eucharistic ecclesiology is expressed by the famous idiom 'the Church makes the Eucharist, and Eucharist makes

<sup>138</sup> Cf. IGNATIUS, *Ad Smyrnaeos* 8:2; PG 5, 851, "*Sine episcopo nemo quidquam faciat eorum quae ad Ecclesiam spectant. Rata eucaristia habeatur illa, quae sub episcopo fuerit, vel cui ipse concesserit*". Cyprian's '*De Unitate Ecclesiae*', (PL 4) can be considered as the treatise on the Church.



the Church'. Many Orthodox theologians such as N. Afanasev (1893-1966), A. Schmemmann (1921-1983), J. Meyendorff (1926-1992), J. Zizioulas (1931-) etc. have developed this eucharistic ecclesiology.<sup>139</sup> Though there is such a well-known idiom that 'the Eucharist makes the Church', the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that all the sacraments 'make' the Church. Every sacrament has a particular role and nature in making the Church. It is very clear in the following statement:

The sacraments are 'of the Church' in the double sense that they are 'by her' and 'for her'. They are 'by the Church', for she is the sacrament of Christ's action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. They are 'for the Church' in the sense that '*the sacraments make the Church*', since they manifest and communicate to men, above all in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love, one in three persons.<sup>140</sup>

What is the relationship between the Eucharist and marriage mentioned in the above passage: both are expressions of communion. Each sacrament, in general, is a communion between humanity and God. Sacrament of marriage also

<sup>139</sup> Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, "The Eucharist makes the Church': An Orthodox Proposal and its Impact", P. VAZHEEPARAMPIL (ed.), *Tradition in Transition: The Vitality of the Christian East*, Mar Thoma Yogam, Rome, 1996, p. 173; cf. P. McPARTLAN, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993, pp. 75-77.

<sup>140</sup> CCC, No. 1118. For more on the phrase 'the sacraments makes the Church', cf. AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei*, 17; PL 41, 779, "*quae sacramenta esse novimus, quibus aedificatur Ecclesia. Nam hoc etiam verbo Scriptura usa est, ubi non legitur: Formavit, aut Finxit; sed, aedificavit eam in mulierem (Gen 2:22): unde et Apostolus aedificationem dicit corporis Christi, quod et Ecclesia*".

establishes a communion with God the Creator of marriage, a communion with Christ the true Bridegroom who espoused the Church, and a communion among spouses themselves. Therefore, the marital ecclesiology consists on the basis of communion – 'being means life, and life means communion'.<sup>141</sup> The sacramental status and the communion aspect of marriage make the Church. The communal dimension of the incorporation 'into Christ' continues in the sacrament of marriage. In this sense, marriage manifests the community nature of the Church. The sacrament of marriage is a 'community of love'. The family is the basic unit of the Church, and Christ sets the pattern for proper personal relationship within it. "No Christian sacrament is celebrated by an individual acting singly. At least two people are required for them all, and the communal nature of the Church is thereby underlined".<sup>142</sup> This 'coming together' as a church is mentioned in I Cor 11: 17; 33. For Henry de Lubac, the Church is 'the total locus of the Christian sacraments'.<sup>143</sup>

MLM in its prayers and hymns express the dimension of communion in marriage. In the service of the blessing of rings, we find, "Lord God, give peace to these our brethren who unite themselves to each other, so that there may be unity of heart between them, that they may love each other and that they may receive each other joyfully all the days of their life".<sup>144</sup> The prayer of *sêdrô* expresses this communion as unending

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. P. McPARTLAN, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, p. v-xii.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, p. 142.

<sup>143</sup> H. de LUBAC, *The Splendour of the Church*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1956, p. 147.

<sup>144</sup> MLM 44; ET 237; ST 32.



and everlasting. "Lord God, give them unending joy in this world and in the world to come".<sup>145</sup> Again in the *etro*, we find, "May they have true love, concord, peace and impassible unity among them".<sup>146</sup> Another prayer expresses the need of uniting their hearts. "O Lord, unite their hearts together that they may approach Your holiness".<sup>147</sup> All these prayers express the communion and union of the spouses in marriage. Thus, sacrament of marriage manifests and communicates the mystery of the communion with God, and the mystery of union between Christ and the Church. In this sense, the sacrament of marriage, too, makes the Church. It expresses the nature and role of the Church. By revealing the intimate relationship between Christ the Bridegroom and Church, His bride, marriage manifests the mystery of communion and mission of the Church.

Christian marriage is a vocation, and foundation of family, and it is closely linked to the plans of God.<sup>148</sup> It is a vocation to love and it implies a specific call from God to the state of father and mother (Gen 2:18, 24). Marital life and love is a sign of Christ's love for the Church (Eph 5:25).<sup>149</sup> Since marriage and the family derive clearly from the order of God's creation, both have a special dignity and sacredness. They are directly determined and regulated by nature and its Creator. Vatican II emphasizes the special significance and role of marriage and family for individual and the Church.<sup>150</sup> The family must exert its influence on the Church and society.

<sup>145</sup> MLM 48-49; ET 239; ST 36.

<sup>146</sup> MLM 52; ET 241; ST 38.

<sup>147</sup> MLM 66; ET 248; ST 50.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. GS 47; AAS 58 (1966) 1067; LG 10; AAS 57 (1965) 44-45.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. LG 4; AAS 57 (1965) 6-7; FC 56; AAS 74 (1982) 148-49.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. GS 47-52; AAS 58 (1966) 1067-74; K. RAHNER, *Studies in Modern Theology*, Herder, London, 1965, pp. 293-94.

It serves as a basic unit of the Church. The People of God are born and brought up in the family. In this sense, Christian marriage is the beginning of a 'small church', the smallest unit of Christ's Body in the world.<sup>151</sup> It bears an intimate resemblance to the universal Church. Showing this fundamental relation between the family and the Church, Vatican II calls it the 'domestic church'<sup>152</sup> or 'church in miniature'.<sup>153</sup> Family is also described as the 'domestic sanctuary of the Church' (AA 11). Christian family participates in the saving mission proper to the Church. It is the marriage which extends the Church through the family.<sup>154</sup> It rests on a sacramental understanding of the 'Church as the Body of Christ'. Christian marriage, by its special vocation, founds, builds and creates the 'Body of Christ' or the 'People of God'. In this way, the spouses make a contribution to the growth of the Body of Christ. They are consecrated in marriage as active organs in Christ's Mystical Body, and they are the instruments of Divine Life. They are devoted to the service of new life in Christ and the Church. Thus, they fulfil the divine command in their marital life 'be fruitful, increase, multiply and fill the earth' (Gen 1:28). LG 11 emphasises the idea that marriage and family perpetuate the People of God in the Church. The spouses, thus, create the structure of the Christian family, 'the domestic church'. In this way, we can say that 'marriage makes the Church'. The universal Church is constituted not only

<sup>151</sup> Cf. V. GUROIAN, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, p. 93.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. LG 11; AAS 57 (1965) 16.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. FC 49; AAS 74 (1982) 140.

<sup>154</sup> W. M. GESSEL, "Hauskirche", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, M. BUCHBERGER & W. KASPER (eds.), Herder, Freiburg, 1995, p. 1218; cf. also K. H. BIERITZ, "Haus, Gemeinde, Kirche: Ekklesiologische Implikationen", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, G. KRAUSE & G. MÜLLER (eds.), Band XIV, pp. 485-92.



through the particular churches, but also through the *domestic churches*.<sup>155</sup> Christian marriage is not only a state of life among others, but a 'vocation' and therefore, it is an appeal to construct the Church and the world. For this, the sacramentality of the Church remains in a particular relationship with the marriage.<sup>156</sup>

The presence of Christ in every legitimate community is called the Church. SC 26 emphasises on the individual members of the Church as part of the whole Body of the Church. In the New Testament, the presence of Christ in every legitimate assembly of Christians called as local churches. In this sense, as a legitimate body of two baptized Christians in marriage which has also the presence of Christ, can be said of a church, consequently it makes the church. In John chapter 2, we find the eucharistic sign, connected with the marriage ceremony at Cana. Here, the wine is interpreted as a sign of Eucharist too. "Thus, the inclusive sense of the Eucharist would have to contain a positive reference to the other sacraments ... And the same could be said to a lesser degree of every other sacrament, so long as the inclusive eucharistic vision of the Church is not lost sight of".<sup>157</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Cf. G. CAMPANINI, 'Matrimonio', *Dizionario della Teologia*, G. BARBAGLIO, et.al. (eds.) Edizioni San Paolo, Torino, 2002, p. 977; G. S. GAJEK, *La chiesa domestica: in una prospettiva orientale*, Centro Russia Ecumenica, Roma, 1984, pp. 61-64; M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, pp. 15-20; K. RAHNER (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, Seabury Press, New York, 1982, pp. 936-37; JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Families*, no. 2; AAS 86 (1994) 868-925; S. N. BULGAKOV, *The Orthodox Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1988, pp. 111-14.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Uomo e donna lo creò, Catechesi sull'amore umano*, Città Nuova-LEV, Roma, 1985, 365-377; cf. G. BARBAGLIO, et.al. (eds.) *Dizionario della Teologia*, pp. 977-78.

<sup>157</sup> E. G. FARRUGIA, "'The Eucharist makes the Church': An Orthodox Proposal and its Impact", P. VAZHEEPARAMPIL (ed.), *Tradition in Transition: The Vitality of the Christian East*, pp. 202, 204.



Each sacrament has an ecclesiological dimension and each sacrament contributes to the edification of the Church in its own way. Thus, all the sacraments contribute to the realization and formation of the Church. *SC* speaks of the celebration of the sacraments which make the Church.<sup>158</sup> Again it speaks of the intention of the sacraments. "The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God".<sup>159</sup> Like other sacraments, the sacrament of marriage also carries out the same role of sanctifying the couples. Through their marital life they are building up the Body of Christ, and, thus, also they render worship to God. CCEO c. 667 also speaks about the sacraments in which the people are inserted into the Church, His Body. In this way, the Church has a sacramental foundation in marriage. Tillard says that we enter the Church sacramentally; sacramentally we continue to be in the Church and live from the Church.<sup>160</sup> The divine nature and organic structure of the Church are effected only by the celebration of the sacraments. *LG* clearly shows the ecclesiological dimension of marriage. It teaches that through the marriage of Christians, a new family is established in which the children of God or the People of God are born and perpetuated. Thus, through the building up of the body of Christ and the People of God, marriage makes the Church. Marriage by its nature contributes to the foundation of the Church in an eminent way.<sup>161</sup> Chrysostom describes

<sup>158</sup> Cf. *SC* 6; AAS 56 (1964) 100.

<sup>159</sup> *SC* 59; AAS 56 (1964) 116.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. J. M. R. TILLARD, "The Church of God is a Communion: the Ecclesiological Perspective of Vatican II", *One in Christ* 17 (1981) 120; cf. P. PALLATH, "Liturgy makes the Church: Towards a Catholic Sacramental Ecclesiology", P. PALLATH (ed.), *Church and its Most Basic Element*, p. 65.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. *LG* 11, AAS 57 (1965) 15.



Christian family as fundamentally ecclesiological. "If we thus regulate our own houses, we shall be always fit for the management of the Church. For indeed a house is a little Church".<sup>162</sup> For Chrysostom, Christian marriage is in service to the kingdom of God and it is a training ground for the proper maintenance of Church polity. Thus, the Church, the communion is effected and nourished by the sacrament of marriage. In this sense, we can say that the sacrament of marriage, too, makes the Church.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we were attempting to elucidate the ecclesial dimension of the sacrament of marriage through the patristic images found in MLM. All the images found in MLM are pregnant with the ecclesiological doctrine, and they express the ecclesial dimension of marriage. It highlights the ecclesiology of the Syriac fathers. In the first section of the chapter, we were trying to present the concept of the Church in the Syriac tradition. Here, we examined the ecclesiology of the Syriac tradition, the concept of the Church in the West Syrian liturgical tradition, other ecclesial images such as the Church as swallow, the Church as the Garden, and the Church as moon. In the Syriac tradition, the Church is portrayed as the bride of Christ, betrothed to Christ at His baptism in the river Jordan, and wedded to Christ on the cross. For the Fathers, Christ gave her the dowry in His blood and the wedding ring as His body. Again, the Fathers symbolize the Church as the re-found Paradise, the Body of Christ, the holy and immaculate

<sup>162</sup> CHRYSOSTOM, "Homilies on Ephesians", A select Library of Nicene und Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First series, vol. 12, Grand rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956, p. 148 (homily 20); V. GUROIAN, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, p. 85.



spouse. All these images express the various aspects of the mystery of the Church in their own way. MLM in its hymns and prayers, comprises many of these images and they present a developed ecclesiology of marriage. It expresses the union of Christ and the Church through the union of couples in Christian marriage. In this way, the ecclesiology of the Syriac tradition is very close to Scripture. We find that the patristic images and symbolism are more biblical, devotional, liturgical and theological. Therefore, the Fathers symbolize the Church through the biblical imageries and they used this symbolical method as a primary mode of catechesis.

In MLM, the Church is often praised in the hymns and prayers with a rich language of symbols and images. It expresses the mystical union of Christ and the Church in its marriage service. We find the theme that the Church is formed from the blood and water, flowed from the side of Christ. Christ's baptism is compared to His betrothal with the Church, and their engagement is consecrated by the John the Baptist. The Church is described in MLM as perfectly beautiful, without stain, adorned with brightness and purified by her Bridegroom. Christ married her on the cross, and gave her the dowry in His blood. In this way, MLM presents the intimate union and love between Christ and the Church, and thus, MLM presents marriage as a sacrament of the union of Christ and His Church. MLM expresses a special love for the Church through its liturgical prayers. For this, many allegories, metaphors, symbolism etc. are used in the liturgical prayers which express the essence of the Church, and they show a great devotion to the Church. Besides the key image of the Church as the bride of Christ, MLM presents many other related images of the Church as a swallow. Garden. moon etc.



In the second section, we discussed the key image of the Church as the bride of Christ. This image expresses the intimate and indissoluble union between Christ and the Church. In the New Testament, the Old Testament prophetic relationship between Yahweh and Israel is applied to Christ as the Bridegroom and Church as the bride. Explaining this intimate union of Christ and Church, Paul calls it a 'great mystery'. This image of the intimate union of Christ and the Church is well-expressed in the writings of the Syriac Fathers, and it has become a predominant image in the Syriac tradition. In this section, we examined the source of this ecclesial image in Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh, the bridal image and other writings, the Church as bride in the West Syrian liturgical prayers, the liturgical passages of MLM, and the doctrine of the Church from the side of Christ in the Fathers and writings. Again, the Syriac Fathers such as Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh etc. are of opinion that the Church is born from the side of Christ. Church, the new Eve is born from Christ's side during the death asleep, just as the old Eve came from the side of Adam asleep.

In the next section, by expressing all the above mentioned ideas, we were trying to establish the MLM as the '*locus ecclesiologicalus*'. Since MLM contains many ecclesiological ideas, it can be rightly called the '*locus ecclesiologicalus*'. MLM also express its ecclesial dimension by showing the role of the Church in its prayers and liturgical celebrations. By expressing the role and mission of the Church which is symbolized by the Fathers through their favourite images, MLM expresses its ecclesiological dimension. MLM reveals that the divine-human relationship expressed in



marriage is realized in the relationship between Christ and His Church.

The ecclesiological dimension of MLM becomes clear in its prayers and hymns. In all these ecclesial images, the aspect of the Church is greatly emphasised. The relationship that exists between Christ and the Church is the source and foundation of the ecclesiology of the marriage in MLM. This ecclesiological dimension of marriage demands the spouses to live the mystery of their vocation and mission, so that they can contribute much to the spiritual renewal of the Church. Through their reciprocal love and union, they build the Body of Christ. The ecclesiology of marriage derives from the liturgical celebration and helps the spouses to live a life according to the union of Christ with the Church.

Another idea we have mentioned in the last part of this chapter is that 'marriage too makes the Church'. Following the idea of the familiar idiom 'Eucharist makes the Church', it claims that marriage too makes the Church. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 1118), we find the teaching that all the sacraments make the Church and each sacrament enjoys a particular role in making the Church. In this sense, the sacrament of marriage, also, makes the Church. It reveals the intimate relationship and union between Christ and the Church, and manifests the mystery of communion and the mission of the Church. Christian marriage founds the family, the domestic church', and it is linked to the plan of God. Family serves as a basic unit of the Church. The people of God are born and brought up in the 'domestic church'. Marriage extends the Church through the family. The family makes a contribution to the growth of the Body of Christ. The spouses are



consecrated in marriage as the active organs in Christ's Mystical Body. Thus, marriage and family are the elements of the constitutional structure of the Church. The universal Church is constituted also through the 'domestic churches'. Therefore, Christian marriage is a call and vocation to 'construct' or 'make' the Church. Marriage contributes to the realization and formation of the Church in its own way. It is from the marriage of Christians that a new family comes into being; in it new citizens, members of the Body of Christ and the People of God, are born and perpetuated. Thus, marriage, by its nature and vocation, contributes to the foundation of the Church. In this way, marriage assumes an ecclesiological structure and manifests its ecclesial mission.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The task of the present work was to trace the images and symbols which early Syriac Fathers applied to the Church and marriage, and to find out the ecclesial dimension through the patristic images found in the marriage liturgy. Even though we may not find a fully developed ecclesial vision at the time of the early Syriac Fathers, it is clear that their writings implicitly contain an ecclesiology. The Fathers often allude to the Church by means of a remarkable array of symbols drawn from Scripture, Tradition and Nature. Many of their ecclesiological thoughts find expression in the MLM. Thus, Malankara liturgy is highly rich in its mystical and symbolical tradition. The patristic symbolism found in the liturgical prayers express the true and genuine faith of the early Church and the Fathers. The present study provides a wider understanding of Syriac theology and the patristic ecclesiology.

The first chapter is an historical approach to the Malankara marriage celebration. The first section examines the Jewish background to the Christian marriage ceremony. We notice here that many Jewish customs have influenced the Christian marriage ceremony. The second section deals with the genesis and formation of Christian marriage in general. This section focuses particularly on the Christian marriage ceremony in the first three centuries and from the fourth century to the present period. The third part treats the origin and development of the marriage ceremony of the ancient Christian



community of Kerala, and examines the Antiochene tradition in the Malankara liturgy. The fourth and fifth sections focus on the doctrine of marriage in the early Syriac sources and the Syriac Fathers. In the early Syriac literary sources, we find many theological themes with regard to marriage and celibacy. The teachings of the Fathers on marriage through the nuptial images contributed much to the matrimonial theology of the Syriac Churches.

The second chapter discusses the theology of the spousal union between Christ and the Church. The first section comments on the importance of symbolism in theology and liturgy, the symbolic language in the Syriac tradition, the symbolic nature of the sacraments, and the symbolization of the sacrament of matrimony. The second section highlights the conjugal symbolism in the Scripture. Here, the spousal images in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the relation existing between Christ and the Church in the Pauline vision, and the conjugal symbolism of Christ and the Church expressed in the MLM are discussed. The third section explores the 'great mystery' aspect of the spousal union. Marriage, as an institution of the Creator, becomes a figure of the mystery of the union of Christ the Bridegroom, with the Church His bride. The sacramentality of marriage can only be understood in terms of the 'great mystery' of Christ giving Himself for His beloved spouse, the Church. The fourth section discusses the spousal union as 'one flesh'. Marriage involves a soul, a mind, a heart and a will. This union affects the whole person, body and soul. Therefore, husband and wife are not two, but two in one flesh. As Christ is one Body with His Church, so husband and wife also are one flesh. The fifth section focuses on the spousal union as a 'sacrament' in theology. The marital



covenant between two baptized persons has been raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. Marriage is a sacrament since every Christian marriage is imaged to the archetype of Christ and the Church.

The third chapter discusses the image 'Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church' as expressed in the MLM. MLM depicts Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church not less than 16 times in its hymns and prayers. In this chapter we study the important patristic images expressing the Christ-Church relationship. The MLM expresses the idea that Christ has purified and set apart the Church for His own. He has given the Church the ring of His body and blood as the sign of this permanent covenant. Another important patristic theme expressed in MLM is Christ's baptism in the Jordan as His betrothal to the Church. To Ephrem's mind, this betrothal of Christ to the Church takes place at the Jordan. Thus, Christ through the baptismal water of the Jordan, has not only purified the Church but has also made her holy so that she might be a worthy partner for Him. In MLM we find also that Christ has married the Church on the cross. Christ's betrothal to the Church at the Jordan was an anticipation of His death on the Cross where he married the Church. In MLM we find, another patristic image: Christ the Bridegroom has given His precious blood as His dowry to the Church. In the Oriental traditions, there is a custom of giving dowry for the bride to marry her. Here, Christ the Bridegroom also gives His dowry to the Church in His Blood shed from His wounded side. This dowry is something unique and expresses the intimate relation and the inner union between them. The Fathers are of opinion that through the precious blood that flowed from His side, Christ wrote the marriage document. This theme is mentioned often



in MLM. It is on the cross that we find the perfect union between Christ the Bridegroom and His Church. It expresses and reveals that He was ready to die for His bride, and His nuptial consent was also a consent to die for her.

MLM expresses other patristic themes such as the purification of the Church by Christ's innocent blood, and Christ's body and blood as His ring to the Church. Jacob of Serugh symbolizes Christ's blood on Golgotha as the ring of His marriage with the Church. Again in MLM, we find that Christ the Bridegroom prepares a bridal chamber in heaven for the Church. Here, marriage is depicted as the final glorification in heaven where Christ celebrates a wedding with those who followed Him. Christ's invitation to His wedding banquet is also expressed in MLM. Aphrahat and Ephrem make many references to the bridal chamber and wedding banquet. The third section particularly discusses the theme 'Christ as the Bridegroom' in the Syriac Fathers and writings. The marriage of Christ the Bridegroom and His Church is a frequent theme in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, the *Odes of Solomon*, and in the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem, Narsai, Balai, and Jacob of Serugh.

The fourth part of this chapter discusses the christological dimension of marriage. The title 'Christ as the Bridegroom' and the mystery to which it refers is the starting point for a christology of marriage. The headship of Christ over His Church is the key for the union between husband and wife. Thus, marriage is a 'great mystery' which reflects God's covenant of love with the human race, a covenant which became fully operative through Christ's Incarnation, His sacrifice on the Cross, and His abiding with His Church. In



the christological dimension of marriage, we find such themes in MLM as the personal love between Christ and the Church, and the headship of Christ over the Church as a source of oneness and unity in marriage. The next section deals with the patristic image of Christ's incarnation as His 'marriage' with the human race. For the Syriac Fathers, Christ's incarnation has its own christological dimension since it is an image of Christ's 'marriage' with the human race. Christ's incarnation expresses His 'marital union' with the human kind. The most common term used by the Syriac Fathers for the incarnation is that Christ 'put on the body' (*lbaš pagrô*) or that Christ was 'clothed in the flesh'. The Fathers consider Christ's 'putting on the body' as His solidarity with our bodily nature. For them, the incarnation is the reconciling of heaven and earth. Through the incarnation, God has been made visible in such a way as to win humans and to draw them closer to Himself.

The fourth chapter deals primarily with the image of the Church as the bride of Christ which traces the ecclesiology of the MLM. The theological insights of Aphrahat, Ephrem, and their immediate successors like Jacob of Serugh provide an understanding of the Syriac tradition and its ecclesiology. According to the Syriac tradition, the Church is betrothed by Christ at His baptism in the river Jordan and is wedded to Christ on the cross. The ecclesiology of the Fathers is expressed through typological comparisons and symbolic titles applied to Christ and the Church. The MLM expresses the idea that Christ bought His bride by sacrificing His blood on the cross. The Church became perfectly beautiful, without stain and adorned with inconceivable brightness, after her purification by her celestial Spouse at the Jordan. The Syriac tradition views



the Church not only as the source of the mysteries but also as a sacrament of the union of Christ with His people. Besides the key image of the Church as the bride of Christ, MLM presents other images such as Church as the swallow, the garden, and the moon.

The second section expands on the key image of the Church as the bride of Christ. The first part of this section finds the patristic sources for this image. In the Syriac tradition, the image of the Church as the Bride of Christ is a favourite theme. The theme of the marriage of Christ and His Church occurs frequently in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*, in Ephrem's hymns, and in the writings of Narsai and Jacob of Serugh. The next part discusses the image Church as the bride of Christ in the writings of other Fathers of the Church. Many of the Fathers developed the bridal image of the Church, and it was widely adopted in the liturgies in order to establish the symbolism of marriage. The next part presents the important MLM passages on the image 'Church as the bride of Christ'. MLM presents Church as the bride of Christ not less than 18 times in its hymns and prayers. Another important idea with regard to this image is the doctrine of the birth of the Church from the side of Christ. The Fathers present the Church as the new Eve born from Christ's side during the death sleep, just as the old Eve came from the side of Adam asleep. Ephrem



the previous sections. The ecclesial dimension of marriage is found in the prayers and the hymns of MLM, and especially in the *prômiûn-sêdrô*. Because of its rich ecclesiological dimension, MLM can be suitably called a 'locus ecclesiologicus'. The liturgy, through its prayers and hymns, expresses the role and mission of the Church which are symbolized by the Syriac Fathers through their favourite images. The liturgy of marriage confirms the identity and function of the people in the Church and it reveals the divine-human relationship realized in the relationship of Christ and the Church. The relationship of Christ and His Church becomes a model for the Christian spouses. With their reciprocal love, the spouses build the Church. The meaning of all the images found in MLM express the inner nature, purpose and mission of the Church. MLM presents the Church as adorned by Christ with imperishable gifts and blessings. Her Bridegroom has given her power so that no enemy can attack her. He has given His own body and blood as the ring for showing His never failing presence and protection. He has illumined the Church with His splendid light, and entrusted her to the mighty hands of His own Apostles. Giving His own blood as His dowry, Christ shows His perfect attachment to her. The liturgy presents the Church as protected and surrounded by three indivisible fortresses – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – so that the Evil One cannot approach her.

The fourth section proposes that marriage, too, makes the Church. Though there is such a well-known idiom that 'the Eucharist makes the Church', the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 1118) teaches that *all the sacraments make the Church*, and every sacrament has a particular role and nature in making the Church. In this sense, the sacrament



of marriage, too, makes the Church. By revealing the intimate relationship between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church, marriage manifests the mystery of communion and mission of the Church. Christian marriage, by its special vocation, founds, builds and creates the 'Body of Christ' or the 'People of God'. In this way, the spouses make a contribution to the growth of the Body of Christ. They are consecrated in marriage as active organs in Christ's Mystical Body, and they are the instruments of Divine Life. They are devoted to the service of new life in Christ and the Church. The spouses can thus constitute a 'domestic church'. Christian marriage is an appeal to build up the Church and the world - a more authentic Church and a more human world. Through the marriage of Christians, a new family is established in which the children of God or the People of God are born and perpetuated. Thus, through the building up of the body of Christ and the People of God, marriage makes the Church. Christian marriage contributes to the vitality and growth of the entire People of God. The Church considers each family as a 'way of the Church'. The Christian family carries out the activities of the Church in its own way, participates in the mission of the Church, and thus acts as the 'church in miniature'. The idea of the 'domestic church' demands that the spouses 'be priests' of the domestic church. Thus, the family becomes an ecclesiological structure and Christian marriage appears as a constitutive element of the Church. The family participates in the life and mission of the Church and manifests the presence of Christ and the Church in the world. Thus, the Christian family is a domestic church not by mere analogy but by its very essence. Being the vital cell of the Church, the family contains the entire Church potentially within itself. In other words, the Church is actualised in the Christian family.

Finally, this dissertation contains an epilogue which consists of a general theology of marriage, and charts of the development of marriage ceremonies, various betrothal-wedding rites and the origin and development of the marriage ceremony in Kerala.

### Observations of the Study

In the light of our study, we make the following observations.

1 – Many of the Jewish customs influenced the later Christian marriage ceremony. We find links between the Jewish and Christian liturgies of marriage especially in the two-part celebration of Jewish marriage (betrothal and wedding), and in other customs such as the gifts of money as the marriage price (*mohar*), the giving of a gold ring, the celebration of marriage with a document of the contract of the union (*ketubah*) in the presence of some witnesses, the ceremony of betrothal (*kesef*), the crowning of bride and bridegroom, the benediction of the couple by a rabbi, and the custom of *huppah*.

2 – There was no specific Christian form of marriage in the first three centuries. The early Christians performed marriage as did non-Christians. They continued to follow the local Jewish marriage customs and practices through the customary domestic rites of the betrothal, the handing over of the bride, and the celebration of the cohabitation. The early Christians adapted and assimilated the Jewish customs and practices in the light of Christian faith. They considered marriage to be a religious rather than a mere civil act. It was the duty of the father of the family (*pater familias*) to unite



the couple in the home. However, the couple were exhorted to remain together until death and to keep the union indissoluble.

3 – In the fourth century, a Christian rite of marriage began to develop. The consecrated minister (bishop or priest) replaced the father of the family as the presider at the marriage rite. The fourth century is considered as the formative era of Christian liturgy of marriage. We find here a sequence of betrothal and wedding, a formal liturgy for marriage, the intervention of the local ministers, and finally a solemn nuptial blessing which was accompanied by crowns in the East and the veiling of bride in the West. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Church obtained a complete jurisdiction in matrimonial affairs.

4 – The studies reveal that there are two historical traditions and two different theological contexts with regard to marriage. The first millennium considered marriage a secular reality, holy and a sacred state. We do not find particular canonical legislation or direct ecclesiastical intervention. The second millennium considered marriage a sacrament. The emphasis in the first millennium was on the spiritual foundations; the emphasis in the second millennium was on the juridical categories of contract and the indissolubility of marriage.

5 - This study confirms the major contribution of the Syriac Fathers to the Oriental liturgy of marriage. The liturgical prayers and hymns contain many patristic images and symbols. The images and symbols reflected in the marriage service derive mainly from the Syriac Fathers. These ideas and symbolism in liturgy are developed by later writers and theologians.

6 – From the extant sources we can obtain a fairly good idea of the marriage ceremony as it was practised by the ancient Christian community of Kerala who were influenced by Jewish, Syriac, and Hindu traditions in the matter of customs, dress, ornaments, language, and food. Christianity in Kerala has incorporated some Hindu customs into its marriage liturgy such as the *Thalikettu*, and the *Manthrakoti*. The Thomas Christians have retained these customs in their wedding services. The *mantrakoti* is a typical combination of Jewish and Indian customs. The Hindu rite of *pânigrahana* parallels the joining of hands in the Christian liturgy. Though the Christian community adopted many Hindu social practices connected with marriage ceremonies and family life, it remained faithful to its distinctive faith, liturgy and norms of morality. The practice of monogamy was insisted on. Christian marriage was regarded as a sacred institution whose holiness demanded unity and indissolubility.

7 - The liturgical celebration of the Malankara marriage ceremony has gone through a process of evolution. Though we cannot find enough evidence for a detailed development of the marriage liturgy in the Antiochene tradition, it is believed that the Antiochene marriage liturgy may have been compiled from the ancient Antiochene tradition by Jacob of Edessa (+708). He writes extensively about the marriage ritual especially the church-ceremony of the marriage. He mentions the ritual of the blessing of the rings (ܥܒܕܘܬܐ ܕܚܘܨܬܐ), the blessing of the crowns (ܥܒܕܘܬܐ ܕܟܘܨܬܐ), and many other contributions to the liturgy of marriage. Bar Hebraeus (+1286) also in his *Ethics*, speaks of the excellence of marriage, and its sacramental nature. Chapter eight of Bar Hebraeus'



*Nomocanon* deals the ceremonies of engagement and wedding as well as the proclamation, rite, form, impediments, consanguinity and affinity, age, place, confession and retreat, dowry, forbidden times, days of the marriage, conditions for the divorce and second marriage.<sup>2</sup> The *Nomocanon* says that a valid marriage must be contracted in the presence of the priest. Likewise, the *Disciplina Antiochena Antica* also proposes some particular requirements for the Antiochene liturgy. In its seventh chapter, it defines marriage as a sacrament, and refers to the indissolubility of marriage, impediments, blessing, importance and symbolism of the coronation ceremony, nuptial banquet, and benediction of the nuptial chamber.<sup>3</sup> *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium* deals with the wedding rites and social customs among the Malankara people in India.

8 - The above details reveal that three elements – Jewish, Syrian and Indian – have influenced the origin and development of the MLM. The expression of the consent, the blessing of the ring and crown, the prayer for the bride and bridegroom, the readings from the Scripture, the ceremony of crowning, the blessing of the bridal robes, the rite of *minnu* and *mantrakoti* and the rite of joining the right hands that we see in the present structure of the MLM evidence these influences.

9 - The conjugal symbolism of Christ and the Church is well expressed in the prayers and hymns of MLM. The liturgy

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. S. J. PLACIDUS, *Fontes Iuris Canonici Syro-Malankarensium*, pp. 107-09; 180-83; *Disciplina Antiochena (Siri): Nomocanone de Bar-Hebreo*, pp. 117-23. *Disciplina Antiochena Antica, Siri*, III (Textes concernant les sacrements), by P. HINDO, *Fonti*, pp. 89-123.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. HINDO, *Disciplina Antiochena Antica, Siri*, III, Textes concernant les Sacrements, pp. 89-123.

presents marriage as a 'great mystery in relation to Christ and the Church'. Christ the heavenly Bridegroom makes an indissoluble covenant and union with His bride the Church. The 'great mystery' and the 'one flesh' image of the spousal union indicates the sacramentality of marriage. The 'one flesh' image expresses Christ's indissoluble bond with His Church. The patristic images in the MLM such as Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, the Church as the bride of Christ, Christ's baptism in the Jordan as the betrothal of the Church, Christ's marriage with the Church on the cross, Christ's blood as the dowry to the Church, and Christ's body and blood as the ring to the Church, express the true ecclesiological vision of the Syriac Fathers.

10 – We find in this study that the Syriac Fathers express the whole life of Christ - His incarnation, His baptism, His public life and His death - in marital terms. They see Christ's incarnation as a 'marriage' with the human race. Here, the incarnation is viewed as a close union with human kind.<sup>4</sup> Again, the Fathers see Christ's baptism as His betrothal to the Church. Here, Christ's baptism in the Jordan is seen as the Church's bridal bath in which she is purified and made the bride of Christ.<sup>5</sup> His public life is seen as His coming to the world as a Bridegroom. Christ spoke of Himself as the Bridegroom in various Gospel passages which refer to the identity of Christ as the Bridegroom.<sup>6</sup> At Cana where Christ, as heavenly

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<sup>4</sup> *HFid.* 19:6; CSCO 154-55/Scr.Syr. 73-74, pp. 72-73, 57; *Sermo de Domino Nostro* 9; CSCO 270/Scr. Syr. 116, p. 8; APHRAHAT, *Dem.* 21, 954.11; 980. 15-16; 22, 996.23; 23, 32. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *HVirg.* 5:9, CSCO 223-24/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 19; *HResur.* 3:2-5, CSCO 248/Scr.Syr. 108, pp. 85-86.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mt 9: 15; Jn 3:29; Mt 25:10.



Bridegroom ready for His Marriage, is typified by the earthly bridegroom of Cana.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the Fathers see His death on the cross as His wedding with the Church. Through His passion and death, Christ proved His love towards her as a real Bridegroom.<sup>8</sup> Here, in all these events, the identity of Christ the Bridegroom is fully revealed. In this way, the Fathers symbolise the whole life of Christ in matrimonial terms. The christological dimension of marriage implies that Christian spouses follow the ideal and model of the covenant love of Christ towards the Church His bride. Since marriage is an image of Christ and the Church, the role of both husband and wife is christological.

11 – The ecclesiology of the MLM lies in a vast number of patristic images found therein. The bridal imagery of the Church establishes the symbolism of the mystery of the Church. The doctrine of the birth of the Church from the side of Christ expresses the intimate union between Christ and the Church. The ecclesial dimension of marriage is manifested in the Christ-Church relation which is the real model for the Christian spouses. Because of this rich ecclesiological dimension, MLM can be suitably called a ‘locus ecclesiologicus’.

12 – Not only the Eucharist, but all the sacraments make the Church. Marriage also makes the Church. By revealing the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church, marriage manifests the communion and the mission of the

<sup>7</sup> EPHREM, *HcHaer.* 47:3; CSCO 169-170/Scr.Syr. 76-77, pp. 183-84, 163; *HVirg.* 16 :2 ; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, pp. 55, 53.

<sup>8</sup> EPHREM, *Arm.* III, p. 150. 22-29; tr. p. 53. *HFid.* 14:6; CSCO154-155/Scr.Syr. 73-74, p. 62, 86; *HVirg.* 19:2; CSCO 223-224/Scr.Syr. 94-95, p. 64.

Church. Christian marriage creates and builds up the 'Body of Christ' or the 'People of God'. The spouses make the Christian family a 'domestic church'. Thus, marriage and family become an ecclesiological structure.

In the light of this study, some pastoral suggestions for the Catholic families are in order. The most urgent pastoral task is to deepen an awareness of the ecclesiological dimension of marriage, and the particular role of the spouses in an ecclesial realm. An awareness of the ecclesiological dimension of marriage would help married people lead their life in a proper way, modelling the indissoluble and permanent relationship between Christ and the Church. It would help spouses to live more according to the divine call. The Church should give spouses a better formation in the value, significance, and meaning of the sacrament of marriage. More discernment, learning and living the teachings of the Church is called for. Marriage preparation courses and marriage guidance councils staffed by qualified experts are needed. In this way, a suitable pastoral approach should be worked out for the couples. At the same time, we have to emphasise also care for post-marriage course so that spouses may be well educated to fulfil their mission in the family, Church and the world. Formed in such a way, they would better take up their responsibility in the families and in the Church.

The Church should also direct more attention to the choice of a partner and to their physical and the mental health. To this end, a pastoral dialogue should be adopted. It is urgent to welcome the modern awareness in sexual education. It is also important to become aware of women's role in marriage so that the family-life needs a fundamental revision. In this



way, the Church has the special task of forming couples to exercise their ecclesial mission in a proper way. The Church's primary task today is to proclaim both the divine nature and the ecclesiological dimension of marriage. For this, the Church should be more concerned about a genuine catechesis of marriage and an understanding of the sacred mystery of marriage. Enriched by a firm understanding of Christian marriage, the faithful could serve the Church and society with the values of love, justice, peace and harmony which help in the integral development of the family and society. In his *Apostolic Exhortation on the Family*, John Paul II exhorts theologians to unite their efforts to illustrate clearly the biblical foundations, the ethical grounds and the personalistic basis for the Christian doctrine of marriage and family, by collaborating with the hierarchical Magisterium.<sup>9</sup> It is the same duty of the Church to form the spouses in the true doctrine of liturgy of marriage.

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<sup>9</sup> *Familiaris consortio*, no. 31. The Magisterium of the Church during the Pontificate (26 years) of the late Pope John Paul II paid a new attention to the family life. For him, conjugal fidelity and social commitment are the two main hinges of the family life. Basing on the theme of the dignity of marriage and family expressed in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church (*GS*, nos. 47-52) of Vatican II, John Paul II paid a great attention to the themes of conjugal fidelity and conjugal spirituality. It is well expressed in his writings such as Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (1981), the *Carta dei diritti della famiglia* by the Pontifical Council for the Family (1983), the Apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988), the beginning of the *first World day of the family* in Rome (1994, then in 1997, 2000, 2003), encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (1995), beatification of the couple, Maria and Luigi Beltrame Quattrocchi (2001) etc.; cf. G. CAMPANINI, "Giovanni Paolo II – Un Papa di famiglia", D. BOFFO (ed.), supplemento ad *Avvenire*, Mensile di vita familiare, Nuovo Editoriale Italiana, Milano, Aprile 2005, no. 85, pp. 3-6.

## EPILOGUE

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON A THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

(1) The comprehensive theology of the sacraments derives from reflection on the forms of celebration of each rite and from the symbolic nature of the sacraments. Ecclesiology also has developed a larger doctrinal pattern through wider thinking and reflection on the Church through symbols and images. Theologians use images to better understand the mysteries of the faith. The symbols stand for a rich and strong religious experience expressing a personal relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> In the life of Christ, Rahner, reflecting on the patristic data, finds a 'soteriological' symbolism. For example, the origin of the Church from the wounded side of Christ is a suitable symbol of Christ's close union with the Church and her dependence on Christ.<sup>2</sup> The Bible abounds in symbols and symbolic language. The use of symbolic language as a mode of theological reflection is a main characteristic of Syriac theology also. The Fathers unfold their theology with its veils of imagery in which we find a wealth of truths clothed in symbols.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, pp. 20-22.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, "É Latere Christi ....", E. G. FARRUGIA (ed.), *Aussage und Zusage: Zur Indirektheit der Methode Karl Rahners veranschaulicht an seiner Christologie*, pp. 272-73.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. H. RAHNER, *Symbole der Kirche: Die Ekklesiologie der Väter*, p. 8.



(2) Symbols facilitate the access to the reality of faith. They open to the plurality of significance, and they invite to the possibility of discovering something else.<sup>4</sup> Symbolism is what makes up the essential dimension of the sacraments by linking together two seemingly separate aspects of reality. Moreover, a symbol by meditating the subject to the object, is a means of participation. A symbol thus reveals and communicates the 'other'. It is a means of knowledge of that which cannot be known otherwise. This knowledge depends on participation – the living encounter into that 'epiphany' of reality which the symbol is. In this sense, the connotation of symbol is both cognitive and participatory.<sup>5</sup> In biblical thinking, the *eikôn* is not some functional representation of a reality already known, but an epiphany or a manifestation of that reality. The image contains the reality to which it points, and not only illustrates the truth of the thing itself.

(3) The sacraments are the symbolic proclamation of the Church's identity. This identity expresses its dependence on Christ. The sacraments are the 'effective symbolic expression' of grace. They are symbolic 'expression' as an operation inseparable from the 'revelation' that takes place in them.<sup>6</sup> The sacraments enable us to conceive of God's action. They are but focal instances within the continuing relationship between God and His creatures.<sup>7</sup> The sacraments are the signs of revelation and promise. They show forth the character of Christian existence in the present and give promise of what

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. MARGERIE, *Introduzione alla storia dell'esegesi*, vol. 1, p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, pp. 139-47.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. L. CHAUVET, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Interpretation of Christian Existence*, pp.380-426.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, p. 83.



we may hoped for in the future. For instance, the Eucharist is considered as a sacramental foretaste of the banquet in the kingdom.<sup>8</sup> In the case of marriage also, the primary task of the Church is to proclaim the full richness of both divine revelation and the eschatological character. Every sacrament consists of two aspects – self-revelation and self-giving. Revelation is never tantamount to a neutral transmission of information, but it always offers concomitantly grace. In this sense, the sacrament is a gift and a task.<sup>9</sup> It is a gift in the sense that marriage is considered an earthly value which is a ‘good gift of God’. This gift of God reveals the fact of salvation in the covenant of grace. To say it with Augustine, sacraments are ‘visible means of invisible grace’. The essence of the sacrament distinguishes it from the ‘non-sacrament’. Therefore, the ‘signum’ of the sacrament belongs to its essence. This ‘signum’ is different from all other signs and symbols.<sup>10</sup> In the Eastern tradition, the sacrament implies the idea of a ‘passage’ or of a ‘transformation’ from the old into the new (Col 1:13). Each sacrament is a passage from this world into the kingdom of God. For instance, in baptism one is not only absolved of his original sin but is ‘transferred’ also from the old into the new (2 Cor 5:17).

(4) Through the sacraments, everyone is enabled to expand his life to the Infinite which comes from God. For example, when one is baptized, he passes symbolically through the death and resurrection of Jesus, through the waters of death

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, p. 70, 160.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. E. G. FARRUGIA, *Aussage und Zusage: Zur Indirektheit der Methode Karl Rahners veranschaulicht an seiner Christologie*, pp. 275-77.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, pp. 135-37.



to a new life. The theology of symbols and its revelatory concept lay the foundation in the ecclesiological dimension of the sacraments. Rahner says that since the Church is the continuing presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, all grace is ecclesial. So, "to deny the ecclesial character of grace and salvation would either imply that grace is not always related to the incarnation, to history and so to the Church, or else it would imply that one can attain salvation without the grace of Christ".<sup>11</sup> The symbols and images have a significant role in religion and the sacramental life. Sacraments themselves are symbols of faith. All sacraments are ecclesial actions and they manifest an ecclesial dimension. For example, the sacrament of marriage confirms the identity and function of the people in the Church and it reveals the divine-human relationship realized in the Christ-Church relationship.<sup>12</sup>

(5) Sacrament – both visible and invisible reality. The sacrament is 'a symbol of a sacred and mysterious thing'. It is both visible by that which is perceived through the senses, and invisible through that grace which is imparted.<sup>13</sup> Thus, sacrament is an efficacious sign of sanctifying grace. The three essential constituents of a sacrament are: (1) the visible sign, (2) invisible grace, and (3) divine institution.<sup>14</sup> The symbolism of the Christian sacrament is not merely figurative, but effective.<sup>15</sup> "The 'something' is visible to the senses, but the

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<sup>11</sup> K. RAHNER, *Kirche und Sakramente*, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. T. POOVATHANIKUNNEL, *The Sacraments: The Mystery Revealed*, p. 528.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. C. KUCHARÉK, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, p.336; cf. J. POHLE, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, vol. 1, pp. 5-17.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J. POHLE, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, vol. 1, pp. 59-60.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. B. LEEMING, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, p. 95.

'making holy' is invisible, hidden".<sup>16</sup> The invisible reality effected by the sacraments is called 'grace'. The sacraments are not merely signs but they are true and permanent signs. For example, Christian marriage is a permanent image and sign speaking of the love and union of Christ and the Church.<sup>17</sup> Sacraments are not ideas but they are in the order of 'doing' which is purely symbolic by joining Christ and the Church. The first function of the sacraments is to manifest the vacant place of Christ and His 'absence'. The goal of sacraments is to establish between God and humanity a communication which theology calls 'grace'. Therefore, sacraments are acts of the Church by which God communicates through grace with human beings. God gives this 'self-gift' through the power of the Spirit, but the fruitfulness of this gift in those who receive it depend on their faith. The symbolic efficacy consists in the use of a 'sign' that says something about something else.<sup>18</sup>

(6) The Sacrament of Marriage looks beyond itself. The exclusive life-long partnership of the spouses make them more open to God. Marriage as a sacrament draws one deeper into the mystery of Christ, and it demands a life in union with God. The sacrament of marriage transposes the foundation of the union between man and woman from a simple natural one to a divine one. It is not only a question of love, but a call and confirmation from God.<sup>19</sup> The sacrament of marriage

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. C. KUCHARÉK, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, p.335.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. B. LEEMING, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, p. xxxviii; cf. also A. G. MARTIMORT, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, pp. 18-64; B. HÄRING, *A Sacramental Spirituality*, pp. 4-17, 197-98; cf. M. J. SCHEEBEN, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, pp. 558-92.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. L. CHAUVET, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, pp. 85-94.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J. VANIER, *Man and Woman He Made Them*, pp. 127-28.



transforms the 'natural' aspect onto the divine level. In this sacramental transformation, marriage acquires a new dimension – the spouses become 'one flesh' and witnesses to the kingdom of God. In this sense, the sacraments manifest and communicate the reality of the world to come. This aspect connotes the eschatological dimension of the sacrament.<sup>20</sup> The nuptial meaning of Genesis is the basis of our understanding of the sacrament of marriage. Marriage is part of the order of creation, for God Himself instituted it (Gen 1:27-28, 2:18-24). God Himself is the author of marriage. Marriage is natural in purpose, but divine in origin. It is sacred because the divine Author willed it to perpetuate His creative act. Marriage is a divine institution and a gift of creation.<sup>21</sup> Marriage is a particular relationship subject to God's active involvement in creation and its survival.

(7) In the New Testament, Christ gave a new interpretation for the understanding of marriage going beyond the Old Testament and Mosaic law. For Christ, marriage should be monogamous and indissoluble (Mk 10:6-11; Mt 19:4-6) and marital relationship is for a lifelong 'togetherness'. This indissoluble nature of marriage is the divine will (Mk 10:9). Christ elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. It is the natural contract of marriage that Christ raised to the dignity of a sacrament. He transformed it into a sacramental sign capable of conferring grace. The sacrament of marriage is a symbol of a holy relationship and a cause of divine grace. In this sense, marriage is no longer a natural, but a sacramental

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. SCHMEMANN, "The Indissolubility of Marriage: The Theological Tradition of the East", W. W. BASSETT (ed.), *The Bond of Marriage*, pp. 97-102.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. L. OTT, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik*, pp. 549-50; cf. V. KHOULAP, *Coniugalia festa*, pp. 17-28.

contract. Marriage celebrated between two baptized persons has been elevated to the dignity of a real sacrament, that is, signifying and participating in the spousal love of Christ for the Church. The sacrament of marriage is a sign that contains in itself and brings about that which it signifies. The Catholic Church solemnly teaches that marriage is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ.<sup>22</sup> The covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.<sup>23</sup>

(8) Paul calls the nuptial union of Christ and the Church a 'great mystery'. He draws a parallel between the human marriage union and the union of Christ with the Church. For Paul, Christ's union with the Church is supernatural and life-giving, imparting grace, holiness and salvation. Christian marriage is also a supernatural union, imparting grace and salvation to the couple because this union derives from God.<sup>24</sup> In marriage, the couple shares the mystery of the marriage of Christ and the Church, and so, it remains a mystery (*mysterium*). Thus, the love of Christian spouses is a sign of the mutual love of Christ and the Church.<sup>25</sup> The sacrament of

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. COUNCIL of TRENT, *Canones de sacramento matrimonii*, I; DENZINGER H., SCHÖNMETZER A., *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, ed. xxxvi, no. 1801. cf. also A.G. MARTIMORT, *The Signs of the New Covenant*, pp. 290-91; cf. J. POHLE, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, vol. 1, pp. 97-109; L. OTT, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik*, Herder, pp. 549-58.

<sup>23</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1601; cf. CIC can. 1055,1; GS 48,1; cf. also A. MIRALLES, *Il Matrimonio: Teologia e vita*, pp. 99-100; 113-115; 127-130; cf. E. TURNER & P. R. FRESE, "Marriage", *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, M. ELIADE (ed.), vol. 9, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, p. 221.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. C. KUCHARÉK, *The Sacramental Mysteries: A Byzantine Approach*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. L. OTT, *Grundriss der katholischen Dogmatik*, pp. 550-51.



marriage is connected with the 'great mystery' of Christ and the Church and is 'transformed' into the indissoluble relation in Christ and the Church.

(9) Marriage is an earthly symbol of a divine reality. It is this divine reality that makes marriage a 'great mystery'.<sup>26</sup> The image of the union of Christ with His Church is seen as the love of the spouses brought into relation with the divine love.<sup>27</sup> In Christian marriage, the spouses preserve the relationship between Christ and the Church, and reflect it in their relationship, so that the union is not only compared to the Christ-Church relationship, but actually based upon it also. Christian marriage participates in this 'great mystery' and therefore, it is a sacrament of this great mystery in itself, through the communion of married life and love.

(10) The relationship between Christ and His Church is a manifestation of personal love. The Church represents the object and manifestation of the love of Christ. The relation between Christ and the Church is a relation of love in a personal way. Here, Christ reveals His love for the Church as a true and faithful Bridegroom. In Jewish-Christian apocalyptic also, the image of Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church is strongly favoured. The passages of Rev 19:7-8 and 21:2-3, 9-10 speak of the adorned bride of the Lamb and bride as the heavenly Church.<sup>28</sup>

(11) The spousal union is considered as 'one flesh' image. This union affects the whole person, body and soul.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. F. J. SHEEN, *Three to get Married*, p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. R. HOTZ, *Sakramente im Wechselspiel zwischen Ost und West*, p. 248.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. R. SOPHY, *Church as Mystery (Raza) and Communion (Shawtaputha) in the East Syriac Liturgical Year: an Ecclesiological Analysis*, pp. 257-58.

“They are two in one flesh”. As Christ is one Body with His Church, so husband and wife are one flesh (Eph 5:29; cf. CCC no. 1605). It is this ‘one flesh’ unity of Christ and Church which Paul calls a ‘great mystery’ in Eph 5: 32. In matrimony, the husband and wife become ‘one in heart, soul and mind’. The ‘one body’ or the ‘one flesh’ image always expresses Christ’s indissoluble bond with His spouse the Church as the source of the love of the Christian spouses. As the members are united in the Church, the spouses are united in marriage. In this sense, the image of ‘one body’ constitutes the very foundation of the Church.<sup>29</sup>

(12) The Catholic Church explicitly affirms the unity and indissolubility of marriage. The indissolubility of marriage is based upon the interpretation of the Scripture and results from the sacramental character of marriage. Thus, its sacramentality makes marriage absolutely indissoluble, and the sacramental nature strengthens the indissoluble unity of marriage.<sup>30</sup>

(13) The marriage is both a secular reality and a saving mystery. By raising the secular reality of marriage into the level of a sacrament, marriage becomes a ‘spiritual communion’. Thus, the secular reality of marriage itself entered into the work of salvation.<sup>31</sup>

(14) Marriage is not only modelled on the Church (Christ’s love for His bride), but the Church also is modelled

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. S. BULGAKOV, *The Bride of the Lamb*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002, pp. 257-58.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. C. DUPRÉ, “The Indissolubility of Christian Marriage and the Common Good”, W. W. BASSETT (ed.), *The Bond of Marriage*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, pp. 341-42



on marriage. In marriage, the spouses are obliged to emulate the self-giving love of Christ for the Church. The deepest purpose of marriage in God's eyes is the oneness of man and woman which also brings them to Him.

(15) The sacramental status of marriage 'makes' the Church. The family is the basic unit of the Church, and Christ sets the pattern for proper personal relationships within it. Christian marriage is the beginning of a 'small church' or a domestic church, the smallest unit of Christ's body in the world. Through their marriage, husband and wife are sanctified and consecrated, and receive both the capacity and the mission to exercise the priesthood they received in baptism with the roles of ruling, teaching and priestly ministering, especially in service to their children.<sup>32</sup> The family is the elementary expression of the mode with which Christ is united to the Church. In this sense, the Church is a sacrament because it realizes the possibility of the profound union in Christ between the two. That is why the family is called the 'domestic church'. The family must be faithful to its vocation, must teach the whole content of the life of the Christian community and must function properly as a model of the Church.<sup>33</sup>

(16) Christian family – a constitutive element of the Church. The married couples are 'procreators', 'creators with God', or collaborators with God through their act of love, in the transmission of life to another human being. Thus, in the conjugal act, the spouses imitate God who created them in His image and likeness. So, marriage and family belongs to

<sup>32</sup> Cf. M. SCHMAUS, *Dogma 5: The Church as Sacrament*, pp. 283-284.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. A. SCOLA, "Spiritualità coniugale nel contesto culturale contemporaneo", R. BONETTI (ed.), *Il matrimonio in Cristo è matrimonio nello Spirito*, p. 46-47; cf. also J. A. KOMMONCHAK, . (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 626-27.



the order of creation. It is in this order that it has been made in God's image.<sup>34</sup> The Christian family, like the Church as a whole, is a place where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life. Christian families are called to witness to the Gospel. In this sense, family is one of the Church's most effective agents of evangelization. The family is the smallest unit of the Church and it is the 'sanctuary of life' where life begins and blooms. Thus, the family becomes an ecclesiological structure. Marriage sacramentalizes the family because marriage makes the family a 'church in miniature'. Marriage reveals the sacramental quality of the domestic church. Marriage which is consummated 'in Christ and in the Church' lays the foundation for a domestic church which is called family.<sup>35</sup> The family is, in fact, a "local church", and local churches are not merely members of the total Church, they are actual realizations of what the Church is as a whole in a particular place.<sup>36</sup> It is in the domestic church where the life is conceived and nourished. In this way, the family is the school of love for the whole Church. Without this domestic church, there can be no Church because it is there that the love of God is kept alive.<sup>37</sup>

(17) The sacrament of marriage presents communion and encounter between spouses themselves, an encounter with God the Creator of marriage, a communion with Christ, the real Bridegroom who espoused the Church by His own blood.<sup>38</sup> This communion aspect of marriage makes the Church. The

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, pp. 15-20.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. S. N. BULGAKOV, *The Orthodox Church*, Crestwood, p. 111-14.

<sup>36</sup> K. RAHNER, *Studies in Modern Theology*, pp. 293-94; M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, p. 184.

<sup>37</sup> J. DOMINIAN, *Marriage, Faith and Love*, 1981, p. 262; M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, pp. 186-87.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. G. WAINWRIGHT, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life*, p. 24.



sacrament of marriage manifests the community nature of the Church. The communal dimension of incorporation 'into Christ' continues in the sacrament of marriage. In this way, the communal nature of the Church is clear in the sacrament of marriage.

(18) The sacrament of marriage is a community of love. The real content and object of this sacrament is love. It is also a sacrament of divine love. Thus, the sacrament of marriage gives marriage a new meaning. It transforms not only marriage as such, but all human love. In this sense, the sacrament of marriage is a sacrament of love.<sup>39</sup> The goal of marital life is the freedom and growth of each person. It implies the recognition and covenant relationships, but in diversity.<sup>40</sup> Marriage is the birth of a true relationship. The husband or wife is not only a partner, but a true and unique friend also. He or she who is the beloved, the chosen one of the heart, is most intimate in one's body and in one's heart. Through the reciprocal gift of one to the other, they become a sign of the presence of God.<sup>41</sup>

(19) As we find Christ's sacramental presence in the Eucharist, we find His sacramental presence in marriage also. As we find the 'symbolism of unity' of the faithful in the Eucharist, we find the symbolism of unity of the spouses in marriage.<sup>42</sup> The idea of real presence in the Eucharist implies the possibility of another type of presence which is not real (conventional symbols). This type of sacramental and

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. A. SCHEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, pp. 82-88.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. J. VANIER, *Man and Woman He Made Them*, p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J. VANIER, *Man and Woman He Made Them*, p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. P. McPARTLAN, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, pp. 75-77.

symbolical presence is found in the sacrament of marriage also.<sup>43</sup>

(20) Christ's sacrifice on the cross is linked with both the sacraments – Eucharist and marriage. We proclaim the mystery of faith in the Eucharist 'Christ has died'. In the liturgy of marriage also, we find the image of Christ who died for the bride the Church. This is a true model for Christian marriage. Syriac Fathers symbolise Christ's death on the cross as His marriage with the Church.

(21) The crowning ceremony is one of the most solemn and important one in the marriage. The prayer for the blessing of the crown is significant. It signifies the blessings of God and it is the symbol of victory, joy and happiness. It points to the eternal crown with which they will be crowned in the heavenly chamber. This crown is the crown of the splendour and glory. The liturgical meaning of the crowning is to associate the bride and groom with Christ and the martyrs as living witnesses to the victory of life over death.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the crowns are signs of glory and honour with which God crowns them as king and queen of their little kingdom, the home, which they must rule with joy, righteousness, wisdom, and integrity. This idea is well expressed in MLM.<sup>45</sup> Some interpret the crown as a symbol of martyrdom representing the endless self-sacrifice involved in marital life. The crowning of the bride and groom was an important Jewish custom, and it is observed

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, p. 138.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. M. SEARLE & W.S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. MLM 62, ET 247, ST 48; MLM 72, ET 253, ST 57; MLM 73, ET 253, ST 58.



still in many Eastern liturgies where the couple is crowned by a priest. It has an Old Testament background as well (Ps. 8:6).

(22) Blessing of marriage - a moment of *anamnesis*. Genesis (1:27-28) shows that the idea of marriage was there in the mind and plan of God. Here God Himself imparted His blessing upon the first couple.<sup>46</sup> The prayer and blessings of the priest have the scope of consolidating the nuptial union.<sup>47</sup> In the second service of MLM, there is a hymn of blessings for the couples. Here, the blessings which God showered on the patriarchs and the forefathers are remembered: May God, who blessed the righteous of former times – Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, and Joseph in Egypt – bless these servants with the abundance of His grace.<sup>48</sup> It is well expressed in the blessing of the Malankara marriage service by mentioning the names of the ancestors. In this sense, marriage can be considered as a moment of anamnesis. This anamnesis relates the present couple to the ancestors. So each new couple takes its place in the succession of generations, of being blessed with children. Thus they become *Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah* .... They assume a role which transcends their individual lives and thus they become king and queen. Therefore, in this anamnesis, their role is situated in the larger context of God's creative and redemptive work to turn them into becoming icons

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. L. GODEFROY, "Le mariage d'après la Sainte Écriture", DTC IX, 2 (1927) 2046; For more on the concept of Blessing in the Scripture cf. M. G. THOMAS, *The Sacred Rite of Marriage in the Eastern Churches*, PIO, Rome, 1992 pp. 10-18.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. A. BERARDINO (ed.), *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, vol. 2, Augustinianum, Casa Editrice Marietti, Roma,



of the redeeming Christ and redeemed humanity.<sup>49</sup> In the book of Tobit 4:12, we find that Raguel took his daughter's right hand and placed it in the right hand of Tobias, saying, "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you. May he join you together and fulfil His blessing on you".<sup>50</sup>

(23) The blessing entailed in the divine command 'be fruitful and multiply' - a blessing of the creation on marriage. It is actually a blessing for Abraham in the context of salvation - "I will make you a great nation" (Gen 12:1-2, 13:16). Marriage as the founding institution of the family has saving significance. Salvation comes from God in human and historical forms; divine salvation is in the secular form. The Old Testament view concerning marriage was that it is fundamentally a secular reality and yet a good gift of God. Matrimony is therefore the realization of the divine precept 'be fruitful and multiply'. Procreation is a 'mystery' that reveals God's creation in which God Himself is active in the procreative activity.<sup>51</sup> So, in the creation account, and in the God-Israel relationship, we find the theme of blessing and fertility. In Genesis, we find that God made Adam and Eve, blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply. It is more than likely that this blessing echoes a liturgical blessing.<sup>52</sup>

(24) Marriage and the family- an image and reflection of the Trinitarian Community. Even though the Father, the

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. M. SEARLE & W.S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, pp. 262-63.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. M. SEARLE & W.S. KENNETH, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. L. DATTRINO, *Il matrimonio nel pensiero di Giovanni Crisostomo*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. S. KENNETH, *Nuptial Blessing*, pp. 4-5.



Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons, they are so intimately united as to constitute one entity, one God.<sup>53</sup> The Malankara liturgy of marriage gives much emphasis on the Trinitarian aspect in MLM.<sup>54</sup> Matrimony is primarily a union signifying the fruitful life of the Trinity and it is signified by a rich unity of Trinitarian symbolism in the Communion of Persons. God Himself is a divine 'Family', a mystery of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Though these three are distinct persons, they are so intimately united and they constitute one divine nature, one God. In this sense, the human family established through the Christian marriage is the reflection of the Holy Trinity, three Persons in one Divine Nature.<sup>55</sup> Their self-giving is like that of the *kenosis* of the Trinity. In this sense, we can say that matrimony is the sacrament of the *kenosis* because the spouses share in the dynamic of the cross and of the Trinity, they participate in the mystery of Redemption, and they surrender themselves to the mystery of new life.<sup>56</sup> In this Trinitarian love, the Holy Spirit has a unique and particular role in marriage. Marriage's sacramental character is obtained through the consecration by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit not only consecrates the spouses, but also sanctifies them in marriage.<sup>57</sup> The mystery of the Holy Trinity remains always a mystery as it presents the idea of plurality in unity. It is a model for the Christian

<sup>53</sup> Cf. M. EMINYAN, *The Family: A Reflection of the Trinity*, Melita Theologica, vol. LIV, no. 1, Valletta, Malta, 2003, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. MLM 42, ET 236, ST 31; MLM 44, ET 237, ST 32; MLM 49, ET 238, ST 36; MLM 50, ET 239, ST 37; MLM 57, ET 249, ST 52.



marriage in which the two persons are united by the bond of love, a love which should be perfect, total, faithful and irrevocable. This life of 'plurality in unity' or 'two in one' makes the Christian marriage and family a 'mystery' as that of the intimate love and perfect union of the Holy Trinity. The proper love between the spouses and between them and their children is the most perfect earthly representation of Trinitarian love.<sup>58</sup> It is through the 'earthly Pentecost' that the spouses become one and fruitful unto their new life. The descent of the Spirit upon the Apostles not only made them one but also fruitful in the development of the Mystical Body of Christ. So, too, husband and wife, through the deepening of their unifying love, become fruitful unto new life.<sup>59</sup> In this sense, Christian marriage, since it is instituted by God, imaged on Christ's indissoluble union with the Church, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, is an image and sacrament of the Trinity.

(25) The concept and theology of marriage in the Eastern Churches. The Pauline idea of the Church as the Bride of Christ had a greater influence in the East than in the West. The Syrian churches have particular liturgical feasts of the Church (*Koodhos Eetho* and *Hoodhos eetho*) as the Bride of Christ.<sup>63</sup> The Eastern theology and liturgy of marriage, to a great extent,

<sup>58</sup> Cf. M. EMINYAN, *Theology of the Family*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. F.J. SHEEN, *Three to get Married*, p. 107.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. R. MALONE & J. R. CONNERY (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Christian Marriage*, pp. 91-93.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. KASPER W., *Theology of Christian Marriage*, p. 31; cf. M T. DAVID, *Christian Marriage: A Journey Together*, p. 98.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. V. GUROIAN, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics*, pp. 81-87.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. G. KHOURI-SARKIS, "La fête de l'Eglise dans l'année liturgique syrienne », *Irn.* 28 (1955) 186-88; F. GRAFFIN, « Recherches sur le thème de l'Église », *OS* 3 (1958) 317-19; cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, p. 344.



was inspired by the idea of the *benosis* or communion of Christ with His Church, in relation with Eph 5:22-32. In the East, there was more emphasis on the mystical meaning of marriage and its spirituality rather than the Western view of its legal aspect. The theologians of the Eastern churches had a less pessimistic view on sex and sexuality than the Western church Fathers and the Scholastic tradition. All these factors make for a different concept in the East on marriage.<sup>64</sup> It was Ignatius of Antioch who first insisted that the Christian marriages should be contracted with the bishop's permission, though this did not arouse a strong response in neither the East nor the West until the eleventh century, because marriage was considered a familial affair with the bride's father having the chief role. The bishop's approval may be interpreted as treatment to a blessing. In the East, the ceremonies connected with the betrothal were considered to be 'mystical' and 'ecclesial'. Regarding marriage itself, from the fourth century there was a blessing by the bishop when upon visiting the family during the marriage feast. From this occasional blessing, there developed a liturgical form of prayers and hymns. Chrysostom refers to a certain practice of prayers and hymns.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the family ceremonies of marriage were given an ecclesiastical basis in the East at an earlier date than in the West.<sup>66</sup>

(26) Studying the liturgical ceremony enables us to distinguish between the centre and its periphery, the symbolical gist of the ceremony and the secondary symbols. The theology of the heart of Jesus expresses that this heart is a symbol of the love of Christ. The incarnated Logos is the absolute symbol

<sup>64</sup> cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, p. 344.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. CHRYSOSTOM, *In Gen. Hom.*, 48, no.6; PG 54, 443.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, p. 346.



of God in the world.<sup>67</sup> Syriac Fathers, as we have seen in the third chapter, symbolise incarnation as Christ's 'marriage' with the human race. Christ said, "whoever sees me, sees the Father" (Jn 14:9). Here, Christ is seen as the symbol of God the Father. Rahner speaks of the ontology of the symbols, "Das eigentliche symbol (*Realsymbol*) ist der zur Wesenskonstitution gehörende selbstvollzug eines seienden im anderen".<sup>68</sup> The symbol that best captures the gist has been called 'real symbol' (*Realsymbol*), as contradistinguished from its contingent manifestations or conventional symbols. As for the essential symbol, this is relayed through the Syro-Malankara liturgy.

(27) The Malankara liturgy of marriage has been influenced mainly by three elements – Jewish, Syrian and Indian – in its origin and structure. The important elements of the Jewish marriage rite such as the document of the contract of the union, ceremony of betrothal, crowning of bride and bridegroom, custom of *huppâh*, custom of giving rings, handing over of the bride and the celebration of the cohabitation are seen in the liturgical structure. The rite of tying the *minnultâli* is a typical part of the Hindu marriage ceremony. The custom of *mantrakôti* is a combination of the Jewish (*huppâh* - bridal chamber) and Indian customs. The Hindu custom of *pânigrahana* parallels to the Malankara rite of the joining of hands. Malankara marriage liturgy has two stages: betrothal or engagement, which is the preparation for marriage, and the marriage proper. These take place at two distinct times. The Malankara liturgy of marriage contains two services: The first service consists of the blessing of the rings and the second service consists of the blessing of the crowns. The first service

<sup>67</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 4, Benziger Verlag, Köln, 1960, pp. 275-93.

<sup>68</sup> K. RAHNER, *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 4, p. 290.



is mainly included with the expression of the consent, *çniyônô*, *kûkliôn*, *eqbô*, *prômiûn*, *sêdrô*, *etrô*, blessing of the rings, prayer for the bride and bridegroom, *sûgîtô* and the prayer of the seal. In the Malankara liturgy of marriage, the pair do not exchange their rings. The priest blesses and gives the rings to both the bridegroom and the bride. The second service consists of the opening prayer, *çniyônô*, *kûkliôn*, *eqbô*, *prômiûn-sêdrô*, *qûqôyô*, *etrô*, readings from the epistle and Gospel, blessing of the crowns, joining of the hands, *bô'ûtô* and admonition. The coronation (blessing of the crowns) is the important part of the wedding ceremony. The blessing of the rings and crowns speaks of the important role of the priest in the marriage ceremony.

## APPENDIX I

# HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Jewish Influences	Early Christian Marriage of 1-3 Century	4 <sup>th</sup> - 11 <sup>th</sup> Century	12 <sup>th</sup> C. to Present Period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jewish marriage: two parts – betrothal and proper marriage</li> <li>- <i>ketûbâh</i> – mar. writ</li> <li>- Presence of witness</li> <li>- <i>Môhar</i>- mar. price</li> <li>- Cup of wine</li> <li>- Giving of gold ring</li> <li>- Crowning</li> <li>- 8 blessings</li> <li>- custom of <i>huppâh</i></li> <li>- blessing of rabbis</li> <li>- breaking of glass</li> <li>- bridal procession</li> <li>- nuptial blessing</li> <li>- wedding feast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No specific form, followed Jewish &amp; traditional customs</li> <li>- Marriage - a domestic matter, celebrated in family circle, father of the family did the service</li> <li>- special household liturgy, prayers, and hymns</li> <li>- betrothal</li> <li>- handing over of the bride</li> <li>- conscious of the sanctity of marriage</li> <li>- Church's consent</li> <li>- bishop's approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formal liturgy of marriage</li> <li>- ceremony in the Church</li> <li>- Presence of the priest, priestly blessing indispensable</li> <li>- betrothal &amp; marriage as two separate events</li> <li>- Expression of consent</li> <li>- solemn nuptial blessing</li> <li>- custom of rings</li> <li>- crowning- East</li> <li>- veiling in the West</li> <li>- marriage service with the celebration of the Eucharist, esp. in the West</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- transference of the jurisdictional power from the State into the Church</li> <li>- Church judges the validity of marriage</li> <li>- marriage listed as sacrament</li> <li>- giving of the dowry</li> <li>- procession to the Church</li> <li>- custom of rings</li> <li>- Veiling/ crowning ceremony</li> <li>- Priest asks the consent</li> <li>- considerable functions</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clerical intervention, but priest's presence not necessary</li> <li>- personal consent</li> <li>- marriage document</li> <li>- custom of crowning</li> <li>- veiling ceremony</li> <li>- joining of hands</li> <li>- nuptial blessing</li> <li>- ritual gifts</li> <li>- celebration of cohabitation</li> <li>- monogamous &amp; indissoluble</li> </ul>		<p>assumed by priest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- liturgical formula '<i>et ego (priest) coniungo vos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti</i>' (Western)</li> <li>- nuptial blessing</li> </ul>
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## VARIOUS RITES AND THEIR BETROTHAL - MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

Chaldean & Syro-Malabar	Maronite	Syrian & Syro-Malankara	Byzantine	Latin
Betrothal	Betrothal	Betrothal	Betrothal	Betrothal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- Epistle</li> <li>- consent</li> <li>- blessing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- Blessing of rings</li> <li>- Giving of rings</li> <li>- <i>Huttamo</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- Interrogation</li> <li>- Expression of the consent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- Giving of candles</li> <li>- <i>Ectenia</i> (Litany) blessing of rings</li> <li>- Giving of rings</li> <li>- <i>Apolysis</i> (dismissal)</li> </ul>	
Marriage	Marriage	Marriage	Marriage	Marriage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- Readings, Psalms, Epistle &amp; Gospel</li> <li>- <i>Karazutha</i></li> <li>- Expression of consent</li> <li>- Joining of right hands</li> <li>- blessing of <i>thâli</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- <i>prômiûn</i></li> <li>- <i>sêdrô</i></li> <li>- Epistle &amp; Gospel</li> <li>- Exhortation</li> <li>- Blessing of rings</li> <li>- Blessing of the crowns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>Consent</li> <li><b>First service:</b></li> <li>- <i>Eniyônô</i></li> <li>- <i>Kûkliôn, Eqbo</i></li> <li>- <i>prômiûn-sêdrô</i></li> <li>- Qolo</li> <li>- <i>Etro</i></li> <li>- Blessing of the rings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intro. prayer</li> <li>- Interrogation</li> <li>- Psalms</li> <li>- <i>Ectenia</i></li> <li>- Coronation</li> <li>- Blessing</li> <li>- Epistle</li> <li>- Gospel</li> <li>- <i>Ectenia</i></li> <li>- Oration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entrance Rite</li> <li>- Rite of welcome</li> <li>- Liturgy of the Word</li> <li>- Rite of marriage</li> <li>- Interrogation and Manifestation of consent</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- blessing of ring</li> <li>- blessing of <i>Mantrakôti</i></li> <li>- exchange of rings</li> <li>- Imposition of <i>Mantrakôti</i></li> <li>- Oath, placing the hands on the Bible</li> <li>- Final blessing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imposition of the crowns</li> <li>- Hymn of Ephrem</li> <li>- Imposition of hands</li> <li>- Oration</li> <li>- <i>Huttamo</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Sûgîô</i></li> <li>- Prayer of the Seal</li> <li><b>Second service</b></li> <li>- Intro. Prayer</li> <li>- <i>Eniyônô</i></li> <li>- <i>Kûkliôn</i>,</li> <li>- <i>Eqbo</i></li> <li>- <i>prômiûn-sêdrô</i></li> <li>- <i>Qolo</i></li> <li>- <i>Etro</i></li> <li>- Epistle,</li> <li>- Gospel</li> <li>- Crowning</li> <li>- <i>Thalikettu</i></li> <li>- <i>Manthrakodi</i></li> <li>- <i>Boutho</i></li> <li>- Hymn</li> <li>- Exhortation</li> <li>- Final blessing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Congratul-ations</li> <li>- <i>Apolysis</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reception of consent</li> <li>- Blessing &amp; Exchange of rings</li> <li>- Prayer of the faithful</li> <li>- Invocation of the saints</li> <li>- Liturgy of the Eucharist</li> <li>- Nuptial blessing</li> <li>- Conclusion</li> </ul>
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In the traditions of the Eastern churches, the priests are the ministers and witnesses to the mutual consent given by the spouses (CCEO, can. 817). In the Latin tradition, the spouses are the ministers of God's grace (CCC, no. 1623). In the Oriental churches, the blessing of the priest is necessary for the validity of the sacrament of marriage (CCEO can. 828). In the Latin Rite, the celebration of marriage normally takes place

## MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE: DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND ANTECEDENTS

Historical	Biblical	Theological	Patristic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jewish &amp; Early Christian Influence</li> <li>- Syriac Background</li> <li>- Indian Adaptations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OT- Yahweh - Israel</li> <li>- NT – Christ-Church</li> <li>- Eph 5.</li> <li>- Pauline Nuptial Imagery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great Mystery</li> <li>- One flesh Image</li> <li>- Sacrament</li> <li>- Indissoluble</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Syriac Literature</li> <li>- Syriac Fathers</li> <li>- Greek and Latin Fathers</li> </ul>

## MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE: VARIOUS DIMENSIONS & INFLUENCES

Theological	Symbolical	Liturgical	Adaptations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theological</li> <li>- Christological</li> <li>- Ecclesiological</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biblical</li> <li>- Patristic</li> <li>- Sacramental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thomas Christians</li> <li>- Antiochene</li> <li>- Malankara</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jewish</li> <li>- Syriac</li> <li>- Indian</li> </ul>



## **MALANKARA LITURGY OF MARRIAGE: MAJOR PATRISTIC IMAGES & SYMBOLS**

Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church	The Church as the Bride of Christ
Christ's baptism in Jordan as the betrothal of the Church	The Church as the Swallow
Christ the Bridegroom married the Church on the Cross	The Church as the Garden
Christ' blood as the dowry of the Church	The Church as the Moon
Christ saves the Church with His innocent blood	Birth of the Church from the wounded side of Christ
Christ's body and blood as the ring to the Church	
Christ prepares the bridal chamber in heaven	
Christ the Bridegroom as the Great Sun	

## APPENDIX II

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY IN KERALA

Marriage Among Thomas Christians	Malankara Liturgy of Marriage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influence of the Brahmin, Jewish and Oriental Syriac customs and tradition</li> <li>- Jewish customs like special music, <i>mârgamkali</i>, custom of <i>huppâh</i></li> <li>- Hindu customs like <i>thâli/minnukettu</i>, <i>manthrakôti</i>, <i>pânigrahana</i>, lamp and fire, anointing with <i>kalabham</i> etc.</li> <li>- Social ceremonies like processions, body-ornaments, dress, traditional wedding songs, food</li> <li>- pre-marriage ceremonies-shaving of the groom's head, ritual bath, adornment with gold cross etc.</li> <li>- Great festivity – bridal procession, ornamental umbrella, music, lamps, elephants</li> <li>- Sunday as the day for marriage, Monday and Thursday also.</li> <li>- central role for priest</li> <li>- marriage celebration outside the Eucharist</li> <li>- practice of monogamy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jewish, Syrian, Indian influences in the origin and structure</li> <li>- <b>Jewish background</b> of two stages – betrothal and marriage, two services of MLM – <i>mkîrûthô</i> (betrothal) and <i>zuôgô</i> (marriage) – blessing of rings and blessing of crowns-document of the contract (<i>Desakuri</i>)-expression of consent</li> <li>- blessing of the ring</li> <li>- readings from the Scripture</li> <li>- ceremony of the crowning</li> <li>- blessing of the bridal robes</li> <li>- <b>Indian customs</b> such as <i>thâli/minnukettu</i>, <i>manthrakôti</i> (combination of Jewish <i>huppâh</i> and Indian customs), <i>pânigrahana</i>, <i>putavakota</i>, lamp etc.</li> <li>- <b>Syriac background:</b> Early Syriac literary sources and the teachings of the Syriac Fathers; patristic symbols and images in Malankara Liturgy of Marriage</li> </ul>



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This book seeks to shed new light on the ecclesial dimension of marriage by using a model hitherto employed in the liturgy of marriage. The originality of this work lies in a new vision and explanation of the ecclesial images and symbols found in the Malankara liturgy of marriage, and it explores the roots, basis, origin and development of such ecclesial images. This study particularly concentrates on the biblical, Jewish, patristic and the traditional-customary roots of these ecclesial images. The permanent Christ-Church relationship expressed therein is really an exemplar for Christian spouses. In this way, the patristic symbols and images mentioned in the liturgy facilitate a better grasp of its 'liturgical ecclesiology'. Therefore, this work is pertinent for a better understanding of the nature, mission and purpose of the Church.

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ECCLESIAL DIMENSION AND SYMBOLISM OF MARRIAGE

